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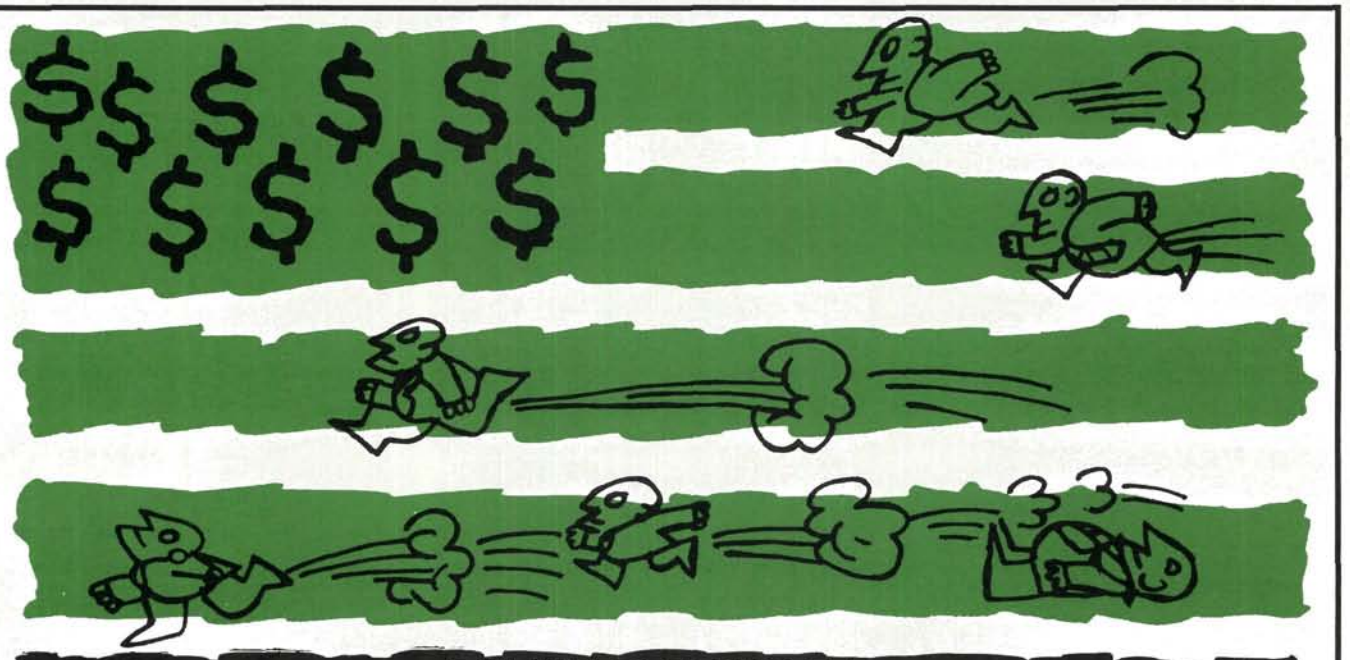

THE WAR AT HOME

OPERATION 'DOMESTIC ORDER': Raymond L. Flynn

FEDERAL BUDGET SQUEEZE: Nancy Amidei

GIVE ME SHELTER: John J. Piderit

THE EDITORS

BOOKS:

EDWARD T. WHEELER on Seamus Heaney • WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS on Christopher Lasch
ROBERT E. HOSMER, Jr. on Katherine Anne Porter • GEORGE IRANI on Lebanon
LAWRENCE S. [illegible]: Religious booknotes

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sunday with Charles

Flushing, N.Y.

To the Editors: I know, I know: "*De gustibus*...." Still, if Frank McConnell ["Sunday with David," March 22] really wants a TV Sabbath experience, he'll have to change the time he attends Mass, because "Sunday Morning" is televised (at least in New York) at 9 A.M. Solid, gentle Charles Kuralt moderates this fascinating program that consistently leaves one with a sense of hope and faith in the human spirit—a wonderful preparation for Mass. The closing photographic essay silently invites the viewer to peaceful meditation and quiet wonder.

So, Mr. McConnell, I suggest that you attend a later Mass. If you can't do without the Brinkley crew, get a teenager to figure out how to record them in your absence.

EDWARD F. DOHERTY

Wrong model (I)

New Rochelle, N.Y.

To the Editors: Abigail McCarthy invokes Sir Thomas Browne as a seventeenth-century model of good manners and champion of the via media ["Mending Catholic Manners," January 11]. While no one would question Sir Thomas's Anglo-Catholic credentials, the matter of his manners may be a point more subtle than Ms. McCarthy allows. In the quotation she produces to show Browne's unwillingness to attack the pope, the English divine states that although the bishop of Rome has uttered "popular scurrilities and opprobrious scoffs at the English church," he [Browne] would hardly refer to His Holiness with epithets such as "Antichrist, Man of Sin, or Whore of Babylon."

We ought not let the elegance of Sir Thomas's style put us off, however. He is every bit as acidulous as our present-day political candidate who might say, "While my opponent has descended to the level of the gutter to attack me, I will not retaliate by raising old charges that he was a pedophiliac, an alcoholic, or a used-car salesman." We are never as vitriolic as when we are trumpeting our own mildness.

JAMES A. SULLIVAN

The writer is vice-president of Catholics United for the Faith.

One sub, many readers

Leavenworth, Kans.

To the Editors: I don't know who should receive thanks for sending *Commonweal* to our penitentiary, but I wanted to let you know that each issue is appreciated. After passing copies around to a few cons in this cellblock, I donate them to our inmate library so that the magazine is accessible to the other fifteen hundred prisoners. The books you review are a little out of my financial range (I'm earning $18 a month), but the articles, reviews, and comments are very interesting JIM B.

From the Editors: Nobody quite knows how this particular subscription got started, but it was probably entered in response to a request that touched somebody's heart. Owing to rising costs, we are trying to harden our hearts to such requests, which come from missionaries, libraries, and schools in developing countries as well as U.S. jails and prisons. Readers concerned for the toxic effects of heart-hardening on us (and on needy would-be readers) can clear our arteries by sending funds restricted for use in this manner.

Lucky Pat Conroy?

Bothell, Wash.

To the Editors: I've been fussing for a long time over my dissatisfaction with the church. "The Unfinished Boy and His Pain" by David Toolan [February 22] shed some light. Pat Conroy testifies, "I left the church, but she has not left me." As I read I realized I'd stayed in the church and gotten left. All the identifying characteristics Mr. Conroy took with him, the church withdrew from me—chants, visible nuns, bells, the ceremony, the adherence to tradition, the vividness of its imagery, the dazzle of its language, the astonishing continuity of it all. He's anchored outside the church with all of it and I was set adrift from it within the church.

Your magazine comes closest to helping me find bearings in this new world. I especially look forward to John Garvey's columns; I feel I have company in my search and struggle. ADELAIDE W. LOGES

Wrong model (II)

St. Louis, Mo.

To the Editors: As a Catholic feminist (if this is not an oxymoron), I was shocked at Eugene Hillman's casual reference to what appears to be Karl Rahner's acceptance of what Hillman calls the "plural marriage model" ["Inculturation and the Leaven of the Gospel," January 11]. (I say "appears" because of the absence of quotation marks in the citation from Rahner; we don't learn his actual words.)

Even more shocking was the statement that this model was not specifically proscribed in the New Testament. One calls to mind what Jesus said about the indissolubility of marriage and his words to the woman at the well about her multiple alliances.

As for his (Rahner's or Hillman's?) reference to the model of the patriarchs of

(Continued on page 271)

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COMMONWEAL

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STAFF

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Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen Alava, Pamela Quatse
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

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A risk in time

"*Gouverner, c'est choisir*," wrote the eighteenth-century nobleman and maxim-coiner, the Duc de Lévis. John F. Kennedy borrowed it. "To govern," he said, "is to choose." The columnist Leonard Silk turned the aphorism to his own purposes in *Economics in Plain English* (Simon & Schuster): "To economize is to choose....Each nation must decide how limited resources are to be used to satisfy both the present and future needs of its people."

Sage sayings; but, in any time or place, easier to announce than to implement. At this time in this country, our biggest problem may be that the nation's leaders—preferring politics as posturing and camouflage over politics as the art of governance—have chosen not to choose; have decided, in fact, to make it all but impossible for themselves or anyone to make large decisions about the nation's purpose and direction. An exception must be made for the Gulf war; whatever one thinks of the choices made, they were quick, clear, and as decisive as anyone could ask. In most other respects we are adrift, and this at a time of economic peril, domestic suffering, and social decay.

One principal mechanism through which our leaders opted for stasis is embodied in the budget-control agreement reached last year by the Bush administration and the Congress. How it works and what it means are explained, in part, in an article by Nancy Amidei in this issue [page 245]. A small-scale example of its effects was provided in a "Washington Memo" by David E. Rosenbaum of the *New York Times* [March 20]. From the report of a long-term study of ex-prisoners, Congressman Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) learned that more than three-quarters of those required to undergo antidrug therapy while in prison had committed no crimes for a full decade after their release. Impressed, Schumer has drawn up a proposal for a $150 million program to provide treatment to all addicted federal prisoners. According to Rosenbaum, no one so far opposes the idea; crime prevention, after all, serves not only potential victims (and victimizers), but all taxpayers, since it eliminates some costs of enforcement and incarceration. Nevertheless, since the likely cost effectiveness of Schumer's proposal would not show up right away, funding it under the budget agreement would require either a tax rise or a cut in some other domestic program (*not* in military spending), so that even its author and chief promoter is dubious about its chances for passage.

Nancy Amidei cites other instances of social investments that are obviously beneficial and have earned a high rate of return on investment—Head Start for children, WIC for pregnant women—but that are underfunded (a condition unlikely to be remedied) and therefore don't reach all they could serve or save all they might. Still another is the closing of subsidized gynecological clinics, reviewed in the *Times* for March 25. Largely because of cuts in federal funding, there are a thousand fewer

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such clinics today than in 1980, and the number of patients getting care has dropped from 5 million then to 4 million now. The trend continues. Three more such clinics in New York City were closed in March, drawing a protest from Manhattan Borough President Ruth W. Messinger: "If you don't allow people the choice not to have children, and if you don't provide quality care early in pregnancy, then you end up paying for additional hospital costs for sick mothers, low-birth-weight babies, and for the economic dependency and substantial poverty that will haunt some of these families for decades."

When the budget rules were adopted last year, few Americans understood that as long as they remain in force they prevent serious attention to these and other basic needs, or that by protecting the budgets of the Defense Department and established domestic programs, they locked us into priorities set years before. That means, according to the sources cited by David Rosenbaum (of both parties and differing ideologies), that the nation's most fundamental problems will not be addressed: "An education system inadequate for the twenty-first century, 20 percent of all children in poverty, homelessness and serious crime in nearly every community, soaring medical costs, and savings and productivity rates so low that they threaten Americans' standard of living."

It is a nice question whether such policies offend more seriously against our sense of justice or against common sense, a.k.a. prudence. Most of those calling for a change in the budget rules are activists on behalf of human needs, and, both in the course of the war and in its aftermath, Nancy Amidei reports that they are having trouble being heard. In his article in this issue [page 251] Mayor Raymond L. Flynn of Boston inveighs more strongly against the stupidity than against the unfairness of a national policy of disinvestment in jobs, housing, education, infrastructure, health care. That is probably wise. As Robert Kuttner writes (*Dissent*, Spring, 1991), "At a time of static productivity growth and chronically slow economic growth, any redistributionist policies are difficult politics." Though it is often claimed that Americans are basically fair-minded, we as a people do not exhibit a developed sense of the common good or of social justice. Tactically, then, the better course may be to show that allowing our deep social problems to go on festering will cost all of us more, in the not very long term, in dollars and in the quality of our lives, than a determined and intelligent effort to make our political and economic systems work for all Americans.

"Now here's my plan..."

It appears, however, that even politicians who share Flynn's priorities are resigned to continued passivity. Rosenbaum quotes Senator Tom Daschle (D-S.Dak.): "Without unity of purpose with a clear objective, without George Bush on television late at night calling the problems to the attention of the American people, without a full-scale debate in Congress, and without the full attention of the media, the changes that are needed will not be made."

That may be a candid, sober, objective reading of the temper of the times. Or it may be a self-fulfilling prophecy, an expression of defeatism and exhaustion. Governing does mean choosing; and choosing requires risking. We hope for more politicians willing to risk.

ET CETERA

THE AVENGERS Liz Smith, New York's premier gossip columnist, has moved from the strike-scarred *Daily News* to *Newsday* at a salary said to exceed those of most editors! Justice enough. Though the *New York Times* does not find gossip fit to print, it fit a story that allowed Ms. Smith to wax philosophical about her salary and the role of gossip columnists. "Most good gossip columnists," she said, "have a touch of Savonarola in them."

Doubtless a touch of Savonarola goes a long way. At least Pope Alexander VI thought so. Alexander's lavish "lifestyle"—as the gossip columnists might call it—was a principal target of Savonarola's sharp tongue. Not amused, Alexander got the Florentines to burn the pesky Dominican—a form of rebuttal that today's victims of gossip columnists secretly perhaps long to practice. Still, Savonarola met his fate a long time ago, and people do tend to forget. As part of its continuing project in religious education, the *Times* informed its readers that Savonarola was the "Catholic church's avenger in the Florence of the Medici."

Avenger? To be sure, the term is difficult to define ecclesiastically. We turned to our standard reference, *Believe It or Not: Everything You Want to Know about the Catholic Church*. Sure enough, in the time of Savonarola (fifteenth century), minor orders included acolyte, subdeacon, and deacon as well as the offices of avenger, terminator, noose tightener, and crossing guard.

Though not quite big enough to contain both Savonarola and the pope, it was—and remains—a big church. Even gossips have long had a secure place among the faithful. You could look it up.

STATUS ON THE LINE The *New Republic* is known and envied for its influence, spritely style, tendentious editorials and articles, and uniformly erudite review section. If it sometimes seems to be an intramural publication of Harvard University, well, Harvard is not such a bad place to play intramurals. If the magazine can't quite disguise the fact that it's obviously smarter than everybody else—well, Harvard will do that to people. Still, even undergraduate preening has its limits. Recently, the magazine

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has instituted a 900 number that allows readers to phone in their opinions: The *New Republic* Sound Off Line. Yes, direct access. No more messy paper and pen or unruly typewriter ribbons. Only $1.25 per minute puts you in contact with "some of the sharpest minds in the country." Or at least their surrogates.

And when you get off the phone with the *New Republic*, you might set your sights even higher (if that's possible). We know of some indulgences at remarkably low prices that might interest you. That number at the Vatican is 1-900-SEND CASH.

NEST EGG INTO OMELET "Over the past decade, the investment portion of the budget—what we invest in our kids by way of education, what we invest in civilian science to stay on the leading edge of technology, and what we invest in infrastructure—the sewage treatment plants and highways and other items needed to make our communities grow—those investments have shrunk as a portion of our federal budget by almost 40 percent. We are eating our own seed corn and sending the bill to our kids through mounting debt."—Congressman David Obey (D-Wis.) speaking before the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., February 5.

RICH MIX The text of Congressman Obey's speech, quoted above, came to us as one item in a packet of materials related in one way or another to U.S. policy after the Gulf war, supplied by the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East. It's an estimable outfit (among directors: Bryan Hehir, Arthur Hertzberg, Dale Bishop, Theodore Hesburgh) that nurtures peace by promoting thought. Greene & Westview, 3rd floor, Philadelphia, PA 19119.

THE OTHER WAR

FEDERAL BUDGET SQUEEZE

SIDELINING HUMAN NEEDS

Try this dream. You've gone to a carnival trying to win some prizes. First you'll try to swing a mallet hard enough to send a pellet clear to the top and ring a bell. You pay your money—but the mallet you get is made of cardboard. No way you could ring the bell.

Next booth offers a prize for shooting ducks as they move along the wall. Fifty cents gets you a loaded gun. You pay your money—but the gun you are handed is loaded with blanks. No way you could hit the ducks.

Next booth offers three balls for a dollar. If you can knock down all the milk bottles with three balls, you win a prize. You pay your money—but the balls you are handed are ping-pong balls. No way you could knock down bottles with those.

Now before you give up, you should understand what is at stake: whether you play and lose, or you don't play at all, will affect many people's lives, and people who are already suffering will suffer worse. What would you do—Give up in disgust? Continue to play? Insist on a change in the rules?

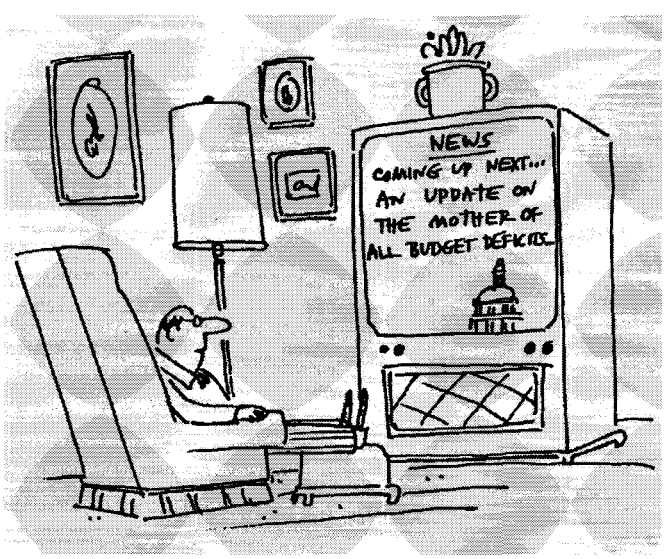
It's not a dream. It's the new federal budget process: it puts us into a game we cannot win without changing the rules. All the same, most people go on playing because the stakes are so high, and they aren't sure what else to do. Under the new budget rules (agreed to late last year by the Congress and the White House), major budget decisions for the next three years—that is, until after the 1992 elections—are already set. The new process includes several key elements.

First, spending caps were agreed to for three categories of discretionary spending: defense, international, and domestic. After the 1992 elections, all three will be combined into one with a single, overall spending cap.

Several major cost items (like the S&L bail-out, the Persian Gulf War, the Polish and Egyptian debts) will be kept "off budget"—that is, they are not counted against the spending caps. While their costs add to the deficit, they do not affect whether the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Balanced Budget and Deficit Control Act is being violated. (You remember that one—it promised to bring the deficit down to zero by 1991.) That was a politically convenient but fiscally reckless way to handle unpleasant items in the budget.

Any changes in entitlement and mandatory programs or revenues now must be handled on a pay-as-you-go basis. If Congress wants to expand Medicare to cover more in-home services, it will have to cut something else within the same program (like kidney dialysis), cut another program (like farm subsidies), or raise taxes. In the same way, if the president wants a new capital gains tax break—estimated to cost between $10-22 billion over five years—he will have to cut entitlements, eliminate some other tax break, or raise the money required in new taxes.

And finally, although the Office of Management and Budget is far less accountable to the voters and has a record of treating economic projections and budget matters in a highly partisan political manner (for example, it tends to overestimate revenues and underestimate unemployment), it has been given substantial



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new powers in determining the national budget. That was a particularly bad move.

Overall, the agreement puts many important budget decisons on "automatic pilot," and substantially alters the balance of power. As OMB-Watch (a not-for-profit watchdog organization) put it: "These provisions...give more authority to the executive branch than in any post-Watergate period...greatly diminish the role of various congressional committees...and...lock future Congresses into a specified spending/revenue pattern which will make it hard for human services advocates to influence the budget process."

Unfortunately for the country, and particularly for everyone concerned about the nation's unmet human needs, the budget agreement is a bad deal on several counts. For example, without including the costs of the Persian Gulf War or the S&L bailout (and assuming the assets of Social Security are not available to meet other obligations), the deficit for fiscal year 1993 is expected to reach $252 billion. That's $32 billion more than it was in 1985 when the Balanced Budget Act was passed. What's more, by 1993 the budget will be so top-heavy with interest on the debt and other costs that by fiscal year 1994, we will be locked into a spending total for human needs $8 billion below what is spent this year. As the costs for health, housing, education, and long-term care grow, we will be stuck with a budget that is less, not more, able to respond.

The new budget process encourages Congress and the White House to leave human needs unmet. It sets up a rigid new competition: new jails and roads are pitted against education and immunizations; doing more to reduce infant mortality could mean doing less for the mentally ill; and any money saved by reductions in military spending can only be used for new military commitments, not, for example, to build housing for low-income families.

But not much has been heard either about the new process or its consequences for people. In some sense, concern over domestic human needs was just one more victim of the Persian Gulf War. Op-ed pages and the evening news were filled with war stories and little else. Even the most poignant stories about human needs, the most compelling budget warnings, got left on the cutting room floors. State and local advocates felt it very keenly: always at a disadvantage in getting media coverage, this year they were very nearly closed out. In a year when thirty states face budget deficits and proposals abound to eliminate entirely some welfare programs, scarcely any attention has been paid to the consequences of yet more cutbacks—even though they are occurring during a recession, and on top of all the Reagan-era cuts. A rare, interfaith human needs advocacy effort directed at the Utah state legislature went largely unnoticed, for example, while national efforts fared no better. A letter signed by 150 organizations that make up the "Coalition for America's Future" last month called on Congress to increase funding for health, education, social services, and employment services in these harsh recessionary times. It included such mainstream groups as the American Association of University Professors, the American Library Association, the American Lung Association, the Council of Chief State School Officiers, United Way of America, several states, and the National Association of Counties. Yet it got zero attention from the media, and the same share from the voters. Human needs issues aren't being rejected so much as they are being ignored.

Meanwhile, the lack of any semblance of national leadership on pressing domestic concerns was thrown into sharp relief by the war. The president placed General Norman Schwarzkopf —proven winner, man of effectiveness and extensive military experience—in charge of Desert Storm. But to see the nation through the equivalent of "Domestic Storm," he chose defeated Republicans in need of jobs and exposure. For example, former Florida Governor Bob Martinez, a political loser, was chosen to head the war against drugs; former Illinois Congresswoman Lynn Martin, also a political loser, was chosen to head the war against unemployment and despair. Or contrast the approach to meeting health care needs: entire surgical units—fully equipped, no expense spared—went into place in the Gulf, where 100-plus lives were lost. But infant mortality, which claims forty to fifty thousand babies' lives each year, is to be fought by robbing other desperately needed health care programs for poor children.

Maybe it's because the war at home is harder—it isn't like "shooting fish in a barrel," not like "sending the New York Giants into the Superbowl against a high school team"—and we only have the stomach for easy wins. We can't wipe out poverty, illiteracy, hunger, or homelessness by dropping bombs for a couple of weeks, so we don't even try. Winning the war on the second front, the war at home, takes a staying power that most politicians, President Bush included, lack. And it takes a desire to win that war that has yet to be revealed. We may not know how *our* oil got under *their* land, but we know that was something the president and Congress cared deeply about. By contrast, as last year's budget deal and this year's budget proposals make clear: the troubled, the vulnerable, the families living in poverty here at home, aren't on anybody's agenda.

NANCY AMIDEI

Nancy Amidei is the 1990-91 Belle Spafford professor at the University of Utah School of Social Work and a frequent contributor to Commonweal.

REPORT FROM SWEDEN

SHIFTING GEARS

WHY 'EC' GO HAS BECOME 'EC' COME

The decision of Sweden's *Riksdag* (parliament) in December to apply for full membership in the European Community (EC) marks a fundamental political shift for a country that had long regarded opposition to such membership as a dogma of its political creed.

For over three decades, Sweden argued that EC membership

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was incompatible with its traditional neutrality. Less than two years ago, senior officials at the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm forcefully reiterated this view to me, suggesting politely that the neutrality of the one EC member-state not a member of NATO, Ireland, could not be taken very seriously.

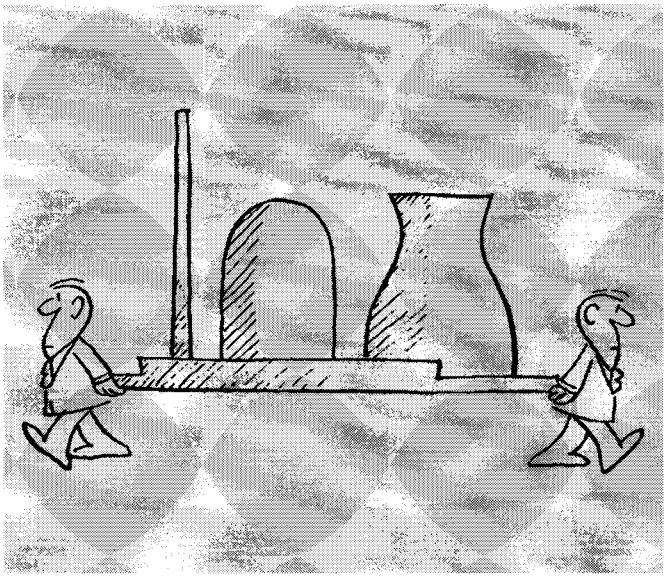
Swedes are nothing if not serious about their neutrality. This they see as just one element of the uniquely successful "Swedish model," that combination of a strong industrial economy which has guaranteed virtual full employment for decades with a highly developed welfare state distributing the fruits of economic success. Swedes have tended to view the countries of the EC as economically weaker and as possessing less developed welfare structures. Joining such a community would drag their living standards down. "In the early 1970s, we would have had a sense we were joining a club that was poorer than us," said Goran Lennmarker, director of the *Ja till Europa* foundation ("Yes to Europe"). "We now see joining such a club as necessary to keep our standard of living up."

Observers give both domestic and external reasons for the relative decline in the Swedish economy in recent years. One is the very success of its model, built on high levels of personal taxation and offering full employment and widespread social benefits that fueled absenteeism. Swedish industry is burdened with high costs at a time when development of the EC's internal market is cutting costs for industry across Western Europe. One result has been the diversion of domestic investment from Sweden to the EC, or, as one trade unionist put it, the exportation of Swedish jobs.

A dramatic example of the consequences of this situation came in February when General Motors, which had recently acquired 50 percent of the Swedish auto manufacturer, Saab, decided to close the assembly plant in Malmo in southern Sweden to cut losses. The reason was not obsolescence—the plant had been opened only sixteen months previously—but the "success" of the Swedish model itself. Like much of Swedish industry, Saab was experiencing very high rates of labor turnover because of virtual full employment. Paid leave, allowing workers off for such things as training, military service, study, parental and sick leave, meant that only 62.8 percent of hours paid were actually worked, compared to 90.8 percent at a GM plant in Belgium. As a result, it took over 100 hours to produce an automobile at Saab compared to an average of 40-45 hours per car at EC plants.

The Saab shutdown is only one of the economic shocks which has served to jolt a rather complacent Sweden over the past year. In October, the government presented its economic plan to the *Riksdag*, predicting that the economy, which grew by less than 1 percent in 1990, would further decline in 1991, and that growth in 1992 would depend on severely curtailing wage demands. Weeks later an austerity package cutting back on social services had to be rushed through the *Riksdag*. Unemployment, which stood at 1.5 percent in October had already risen to 2.3 percent by mid-January, a serious worry to Swedes.

In the last year, growing recognition of the country's problems led to a general reconsideration of membership in the EC. Whereas industry had been pushing for closer links for a number of years, the ruling Social Democrats and the huge LO trade



union confederation had been skeptical. They feared any undermining of the "Swedish model," developed under fifty years of Social Democratic rule. Yet, the about-turn came with remarkable swiftness. It was led by an ambiguous article last May by Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson in the popular daily paper *Dagens Nyhter*. Regarded by some as closing the door to membership, the paper's editor, Olof Santesson, told me that he and his colleagues saw it as an attempt by the prime minister "to educate his own party activists to start thinking the unthinkable."

Once the EC issue was addressed, the traditional anti-EC consensus quickly disintegrated. The two main conservative parties, the Moderates and the Liberals, soon came out in favor of applying to join. (They appear ready to replace the Social Democrats in government following next September's general elections.) By August, the LO confederation stated that it saw "no way around the EC," and at its own party congress in September, the Social Democrats adopted a similar line.

Underlying this sudden shift in public opinion is a recognition of the weakness of the national state in the face of the EC. Over recent years, Sweden had hoped to redress its disadvantageous economic position through the negotiation of a European Economic Area between the six countries of the European Free Trade Association and the EC; but it became increasingly clear to Swedish decision-makers that, if successful, this would effectively give Sweden open access to the EC but without any say in EC decisions.

Sweden now wants to influence the future development of the EC, recognizing, as the senior Social Democratic member of the *Riksdag*, Lennart Pettersson, put it, the need for "supranational decision making to control capital and multinational companies." He told me that "membership in the EC presents a real opportunity to get back some powers that the national state had. The only future of the Swedish model lies within the EC."

Swedes are also rethinking their neutrality. As a result of the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, Sweden's joining the EC would no longer likely be seen by Moscow as an alignment

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with its enemies. In fact, some foreign policy analysts argue that a neutral Sweden would have greater influence within the EC than outside. It is widely expected that a Swedish application will soon be joined by ones from Norway and Finland, leading eventually to a Nordic bloc within the EC.

Another critical dimension of this volte-face is a perceptible shift among the young away from the traditional values underpinning the Swedish model. Ola Bjorlin, a high-school teacher, told me of the results of a survey he did among his pupils on what would be regarded as the hallmarks of Swedish social democracy: aid to the third world, a liberal refugee policy, and active international solidarity. He found low levels of support for such policies, particularly among working-class men. His data, he said, "should worry the Social Democrats and the LO." A foreign journalist, who has lived in Sweden for five years, explained that the country's success was based on a puritanical work ethic. Now, however, the young are more interested in enjoying the wealth than in creating it, he said.

While joining the EC is not an answer to these problems, it is seen as putting Sweden in the European mainstream. The unspoken assumption is that this will jolt the country out of its comfortable complacency. While even trade union leaders admit that unemployment will have to rise, all see it as laying a more solid foundation for future prosperity. They are less forthcoming about whether it also marks the definitive end of the Swedish model.

PEADAR KIRBY

Peadar Kirby is a free-lance journalist who reports frequently on Ireland and Europe for Commonweal.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

THE GULF WAR

A QUESTION REMAINS

It has haunted me during, before, and after the war. What kind of people are we? And I am not alone. I returned from a short trip recently to find sad and despairing letters in a heap of mail that awaited me. One friend wrote from Texas: "The war has been a nightmare. I thought I was out of tune with America when Reagan was elected. But I wonder if I am crazy or everyone else is. Being for peace is a lonely business." And a friend from overseas wrote of recently deceased friends: "At least they have been spared our euphoric oblivion of eighty to one hundred thousand dead Iraqis."

From the beginning, national interest in the war was interest in a contest. Our complete absorption in it once January 15 had come and gone and the air sorties began, coincided with the hiatus between the football and basketball seasons. Columnist Mark Shields quotes writer John R. Tunis's observation that losing is our only national sin. We watched our professional soldiers and volunteer army much as we watch our hired professional athletes. That they gave us a win and vicarious victory so quickly and efficiently evidently rejoiced the American soul. Our side won, after all, at small cost in American lives. And the victory gave President George Bush, the man responsible for it all, a 91 percent approval rating.

Do we really not care or realize that our air sorties meant that thousands of Iraqi soldiers—as human as our soldiers, helpless draftees and family men—were burned alive or buried in their bunkers? Will we continue to ignore the civilian dead as a result of the bombing of Iraqi cities—and those who will continue to die from the lack of food, water, sanitation, and medical supplies? Did we have to wait to be shamed by the testimony of the executive directors of refugee organizations about starving refugees in American-occupied Iraq and on the borders into providing a food lift? Will we continue to be party to forced repatriation of the Iraqi soldiers who surrendered in such large numbers, sending them back to severe reprisals and civil war?

It is true that this aspect of the war was skillfully underplayed by a post-Vietnam military which had learned to manage the news and knew how to spare us the sight of the bloody consequences of our actions. But now we have seen the pictures of the sixty-mile-long cortege of *retreating* Iraqi tanks destroyed by our air power. We have read the testimony of our own soldiers whose job it was to inspect those tanks and who, to their credit, were shaken by the burned, mummified bodies and those torn apart by wild dogs and vultures. Well, this is war, after all, say those who still glory in the victory, war means killing.

The conclusion is, I think, that despite the pronouncements of some of our bishops (but not the pope!) there is no such thing as a just war given the technology of modern warfare. (A conclusion to which a prophetic Dorothy Day came decades ago.) And yet it seems we have not yet reached the stage where we know how to avoid war altogether if we are to protect our national interests (oil in this case) or halt aggression. But this time we came close. We resorted first to sanctions and they might have worked in the end. The debate in Congress was serious and heartfelt. Few of those debating were self-seeking and the vote was

"We've been called to clean-up the Gulf."

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close. Even General Norman Schwarzkopf said in December that it was better to wait eighteen months in the desert than to lose a single life.

It may be, as Larry Weiss, a member of the Minneapolis Pledge of Resistance, believes and wrote (*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, March 20) that the resort to war was attributable to only one man, President Bush:

"Bush had his own reasons for choosing slaughter when waiting would have worked. He stated in his inaugural address in January 1989, that one of the objectives of his administration was to put an end to the 'Vietnam syndrome.' It was startling to hear. Clearly he was deadly serious....

"The goal Bush expressed in 1989 had only one practical meaning that from the time he came into office he was looking for a war to wage. Where the war was to be waged was not so important as that it be one for which he could gain widespread domestic support. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was the opportunity and Saddam Hussein was the perfect hatable enemy....

"But why did Americans buy it? Was it because we could win this one? Was winning more important than the scores of thousands of lives that were unnecessarily taken? What did we win? Bush has now proved that the richest and most powerful nation on earth, by spending a decade sucking funds from the health, welfare, and education of its children and giving the money to weapons production, can annihilate a third-world country with a second-rate military. Is this something to be proud of?"

Surprisingly, hawkish columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, in a column acknowledging their prewar errors in prediction (*Washington Post*, March 8), also fault the president, not so much for his motives as his method:

"We do continue to question the means chosen by Bush to go to war: mobilization and deployment eight thousand miles away of an immense military force without a single vote by Congress; then—at the very flash point—the rush on Congress to approve it. Under such procedures, it is hard to imagine any bar on any president waging any war in the future that he says is required to correct gross injustice.

"We also question mortgaging U.S. support for freedom movements in the Soviet Union to ensure its forbearance. If democracy and self-determination are only secondary factors, the new world order is diminished."

Perhaps our postgame euphoria will be succeeded by a postgame hangover. We will face the reality of the morning after. All is not well in either civil-war-torn Iraq or in Kuwait, where Iraqi torturers of Kuwaitis were succeeded by Kuwaiti torturers of Palestinians and unlucky Iraqi prisoners. Now our leaders seem passive —even acquiescent—in the face of Saddam's slaughter of Kurds and Shiites. We may come to question whether the cost in American arms and even the small cost in American lives was worth it.

But will we recover from our war-induced callousness? Perhaps not those in this adult generation, but Larry Weiss tells of a California fifth-grader interviewed on CNN who said, "I didn't know how many dead there were. That was murder, that was wrong." A high-school senior asked about the war in my local diocesan paper was emphatic: "I did not support the war at all. I am opposed to all forms of violence and am glad that the actual fighting is over. The true aggression that caused the fighting will remain and has created an environment that promotes imperialism, injustice, and, very likely, future conflicts. I hope that true peace can be established and that all people are treated justly and given the respect due children of God." He was, however, only one out of five. There *is* hope but the question still remains: What kind of people are we? □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

CHRISTIAN WHOLENESS

NEVER WHAT WE EXPECT

When our children were young enough to hate it, my wife and I were members of a madrigal group which met regularly at our house to sing, rather badly, some truly beautiful music. Our bad singing was unintentional, but frequently apparent. The kids would hide under the piano and occasionally comment on the stupidities of one or another of the adults, though not to our faces. This ridicule did not exclude me or Regina. The group would sing for awhile, then drink beer or soft drinks and eat and talk. Our house was the usual location for the group's meetings because we were the only singers with young children. The other members of the group were either single, or childless married people, and thus a little more portable.

What surprised us all, when we thought about it, was what a disparate group it was (and if you'd heard our singing you might call us desperate as well). We had almost nothing in common. Among us were people of several religious traditions, some who had none, and one who was suffering through a juvenile rejection of his religious heritage—a young Jew, younger than his chronological age, who once thought he would shock us by eating a bacon sandwich on Yom Kippur and succeeded only in irritating us. We worked in a number of different fields. Though we were a relatively young bunch, our youth was pretty relative, with a fifteen-year age spread between the oldest and youngest member. What we had in common was a love of madrigals, of singing, and a tolerance for hearing both loves challenged by our often slipshod performance in the name of the higher love. An enjoyment of the company—a surprise in that enjoyment, considering how diverse we were—also had a lot to do with it.

Remembering this I realize that there is a metaphor here for what the church means to a lot of us. The church tends to be free of the obsessions that characterize much of the larger society. At the chapel where we worship there are people of all

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races, income levels, and classes. We have nothing in common except our common faith, just as the madrigal group had nothing in common but the common love of that kind of music, and fellowship. While there are some churches that are more or less defined ethnically (the Armenian church, for example), or reflective of social status (two churches in my home town, one Presbyterian and the other Episcopalian, were for awhile the places Methodist car dealers moved into after they made enough money; they were adjuncts to the country club), it is more typical for a church to cut across social and, increasingly, racial lines. Churches at their best are classless.

I worked for awhile with an atheist whose wife wanted to join a Unitarian congregation, for the sake of their child, who, she thought, would miss the experience of church, something every child should have—like piano lessons or braces. He resisted. If they were going to send their child to any church he would (1) not accompany her, and (2) insist that it be a mainstream, preferably Protestant, church. His reason was that in the Unitarian church his daughter would meet only people like themselves: political liberals, essentially secular in their outlook, usually relatively affluent, Volvo-driving sorts. "It's the only thing some of the churches have been good for," he said. "In churches you can meet people you have nothing in common with, and that's a good thing."

You might also meet people with whom you *do* have something in common, and that too is a pleasant thing. There is a Christian truth, anyway, in the way churches can cut through social barriers that seem to be erected nearly everywhere else. In smaller church communities this can lead to the most active forms of charity and personal involvement, as it should. I know of people who have left large and impersonal churches for smaller ones, with no attention at all to the theological differences, sometimes radical, between the community being left and the one being joined. What they are looking for is the experience of a real community.

This experience is a good and understandable thing. A church that ignores it, or acts as if it were unimportant, will suffer for it, and deserves to suffer. But the experience is not, in itself, enough. Nor is our enjoyment of the ways in which the experience of a church can cut through the barriers that exist elsewhere, or the fact that there is often a more active, immediate charity at work in a smaller community.

I don't mean to be puritanical here. These are good things. They foreshadow the Kingdom of God, and are worth celebrating, within their limits. The limits are there, however, and they are important. Where one kind of sacramental theology can move in the direction of denying the Incarnation by minimizing feelings and experience, which are certainly essential to human being and development, another can make positive, healthy, and enjoyable experiences the criteria for goodness. This denies the Incarnation as well, by ignoring the human facts (more common, perhaps) of pain, abandonment, desolation, and emptiness, experiences Jesus himself endured and shares with us.

A community of alleged Christians should not inflict that set of unhappy experiences on its members, but it must take negative human experiences into account—and not only take them into account to eliminate them or even to heal them, but to reveal the divine depths even of unhealable suffering. The fact that after the Resurrection Jesus' wounds were glorified, not eliminated, is something a society oriented towards health needs to understand. A friend of mine, a schizophrenic, has managed to bring an astonishing level of compassion and understanding to his relationship with people who have made his life profoundly difficult. In all likelihood he will never be "well" in the terms this society values; I think he is already closer to the Kingdom of God than most healthy people will ever be.

The Kingdom of God is not among us, or within us, in order to make us feel good. We are to be transformed. In baptism we die and rise again. This doesn't allow us to keep very much. Where feeling becomes the criterion, the most bizarre cults can flourish, because feelings of virtually any sort can be provided by nearly anyone. It is understandable to want to feel good, and it is right to enjoy the communities that give us a sense of shared joy in a common love. The church should provide that sense to its members. It should be a place completely free of the social pressures and status concerns that infect the rest of the culture. To the extent that it is not, it isn't Christian.

To stop there, at the sense of community, the church as a liberated zone, would be easy. It would almost be enough to prove the church's worth, as the atheist quoted above understood. And it does work, as well for an atheist as for a believer, and that is part of the problem.

We can turn our little liberated zone into another kind of club, one in which ordinary barriers don't apply—that lack of barriers is a hallmark of the society, the way fezzes are if you're a Shriner. The crucified Christ here is a dramatic symbol that can be brought in from the side, but is hardly at the center.

This is, however, the scandal we are supposed to preach. How open are we to any suffering that is really a cry from the depths? The desolate boredom of rich suburbs can be as spiritually horrifying, as much a trap that will lead to eternal death, as the suffering of trapped peasants. The response of conservative churchpeople seems to be to pretend that there is no real horror anywhere here, only a falling away from the right kind of churchiness. Liberals argue that the horrors can be bridged by a kind of political solidarity between the bored rich and the tormented poor, as if the parable of the beggar Lazarus were wrong and a great gulf was not in fact set between them. The argument between advocates of any sort of liberation theology and any sort of conservative reaction to it strikes me as an argument between clubs, both of which want to claim as a symbol something that, if it could be claimed as they seem to want to claim it, will damn them both. To *use* the figure of the crucified Christ for anything, to use this to illustrate, or score points, or illuminate—to do anything other than stop short before this—is evil. This isn't a metaphor we are allowed to use.

One mark of the church's wholeness must be a willingness to receive and live with the unfashionably wounded, the truly insufferable, the difficult, the wounded who make you want to cross the street to avoid them. If our liberation is only a willingness to associate with the like-minded, or the emotionally congenial, it isn't liberation. □

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OPERATION 'DOMESTIC ORDER'

DEVISING A 'FAIR FEDERALISM'

RAYMOND L. FLYNN

Now that the war has ended, America must turn its attention to rebuilding our nation's cities. The focus must shift from Kuwait City to Kansas City, from Baghdad and Basra to cities like Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, and Washington, D.C.

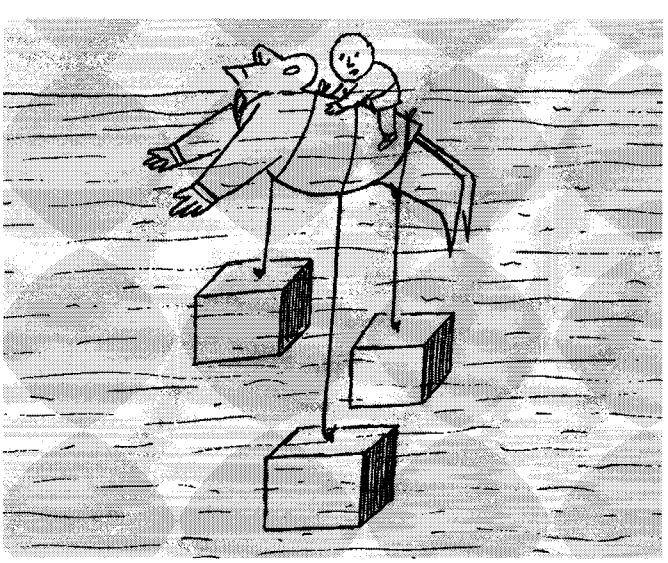
By marshaling all the resources and political will required to do the job, the United States liberated Kuwait. Now we should turn our talent and energies to liberating our cities from deepening poverty, growing illiteracy, tragic homelessness, devastating infant mortality, rising unemployment, and widespread despair. It is time to quell the "quiet riots" of drug dependency, violence, and crime by launching a domestic economic recovery plan that invests in jobs and people. By doing so, we can address America's other gulf crises—the widening gulf in wealth between the rich and the poor, and the growing gulf in competitiveness between the U.S. and other industrial nations.

As our troops come home they will find a nation still in the midst of recession, still with no plan for dealing with rising unemployment and poverty, a country where 35 million people lack health insurance, cities with levels of infant mortality rivaling those of the third world, and coping desperately with mounting homelessness, crime, and racial unrest. But they will witness little public debate about how to solve these problems and few signs of a commitment by the White House or Congress to rethink national priorities.

Many Americans were proud of President George Bush's leadership in winning the war in the Persian Gulf. To win the war against economic decline and social injustice at home, we need the same kind of determination. Our leaders must begin to forge a domestic agenda that is as bold and aggressive as those that were put in place when our troops came home from World War II and Korea. So far, however, neither the president nor Congress has exhibited a sense of urgency about our serious domestic problems.

In his State of the Union speech, for example, President Bush focused primarily—and correctly—on the crisis in the Persian Gulf. But he gave no serious attention to the dismaying circumstances many of our troops are now facing as they return to their cities, neighborhoods, families, and workplaces. The president compounded the problem a few days later in his budget proposal to Congress, which all but ignored the troubled state of our economy, the suffering and despair of millions of citizens, and the fiscal dilemmas faced by local and state governments across the country.

Imagine our response if an aggressive foreign power invaded another country, took away billions of dollars, forced its communities to close down schools and police stations, and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and hungry. That's the way Washington appears to many of us in America's cities today: an aggressive, hostile power that for ten years has, in effect, waged a continuing war against the cities and the poor, slashing away at important urban programs. Funding for these key programs—such as revenue sharing, economic development, and job training—was reduced from $23 billion a year in 1981 to $13 billion today. In addition, Washington cut housing assistance by over 70 percent, from more than $33 billion annually to less than $10 billion.



RAYMOND L. FLYNN, *mayor of Boston, will become president of the United States Conference of Mayors in June. He is currently its vice-president and chair of its task force on hunger, homelessness, and poverty.*

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Why do mayors like myself look to the White House and Congress for leadership in addressing urban problems? First, because the kinds of problems being addressed here are not local but national in their origin and scope, and in their effects on the national well-being. For one example: No one city, nor all of them together, brought about the recession; neither singly nor in concert can they reverse it. Yet the effects of recession hit hardest and most directly on poor people, and most low-income Americans live in the cities. The problems were bad enough *before* the recession began. Now their effects are visibly spreading beyond the core cities.

Second, we look to Washington because Washington is where the money is. The federal government has used its preemptive powers to capture the lion's share of governmental revenues. But it's not a mistake or an accident that the national government stands first in line where taxes are concerned. Federal functions (foreign relations, national defense, interstate commerce and transit, etc.) are inherently costly. Moreover, only the federal government is able to spread the burdens of taxation equitably over all strata of society and all corners of the land.

The problem is that Washington not only collects the most money but decides where it is to be spent—and sometimes, as over the past decade and more, neither prudently nor productively. Thus, mayors like myself are not running to the federal trough to get help for problems of our own making. (Every year in recent times my own city has balanced its budget and achieved higher bond ratings; here and across the country, citizen satisfaction with *municipal* government is relatively high.) Rather we are asking national policymakers to open their eyes to the debilitating effects of federal funding decisions on our cities—which contribute at least their fair share of federal revenues—and the concomitant effects on the nation.

Consider the situation I know best. During the past decade, Boston, like many cities, lost hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds for housing, health care, job training, and community development. Yearly federal assistance to Boston was slashed from $150 million to $64 million—this in the very period when the plagues of homelessness, AIDS, and crack addiction were reaching crisis proportions. For a while, and in some regions of the country, state governments were flush with revenues and able to cushion some of the blow caused by the national government's retreat from the cities. But now most states are facing fiscal crises and budget deficits, and can no longer provide an additional safety net. With old problems festering, new ones appearing, and both kinds made worse by recession, cities face the impact of state cutbacks added to federal indifference.

That is why we need federal leadership to rebuild our cities. So far, we are not getting it. In his annual address, the president did not describe the real state of the union. He did talk about bailing out the banking industry and he once more pursued his personal holy grail, a cut in the capital gains tax; we heard nothing about jobs for the jobless, homes for the homeless, about fighting poverty and seriously promoting economic recovery. Mr. Bush's budget proposal continues a decade of federal withdrawal from concern for the cities and their people. Meantime, by adopting new budget-making rules in the name of fighting the deficit, the Congress has tied itself into procedural knots that all but preclude even the most obviously prudent and cost-effective new initiatives to deal with even the most demanding of our many crises.

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. Officials in Washington met last summer to consider proposals for a new antipoverty effort, but they concluded that it was either too expensive or too controversial. One Bush administration official was quoted as saying that their decision was to "keep playing with the same toys. But let's paint them a little shinier."

This is a recipe for disaster. Our cities are a tinderbox, waiting to explode. For example:

- Last year the U.S., and most major cities, had the highest number of murders ever recorded. A growing number of young people are involved in gangs and the underground economy of drugs. Homicide is now the leading cause of death among young black males.
- Demand for emergency shelter and soup kitchens has climbed steadily for a decade, according to annual surveys by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Families with children are the fastest rising segment of Americans who are hungry and homeless.
- Racially-motivated incidents of crime and violence are on the rise. As the recession deepens, and competition for scarce resources (including jobs) tightens, prejudice and bigotry could increase.

Let's be clear: We are fighting this war against drugs, violence, and crime today because the federal government— both the White House and Congress—abandoned the war on poverty. Mistakes were made in that war. Some causes of poverty were not addressed. Some approaches were oversold and/or inadequately monitored. But progress was made, and there was promise of more when the costs of that other war (in Southeast Asia) and, later, the rhetoric of supply-side ideologues brought about wholesale retreat. Poverty has been declared a nonproblem, when in fact it is the root and ground of the other conditions that threaten us. More than 33 million Americans—one out of seven—live below the poverty line. The figure for children is yet more alarming: one of every four lives in poverty (among blacks, one of every two). Compared with a decade ago, today's poor are poorer, and likely to be poor for longer periods. More people today are likely to earn their poverty on the job—the "working poor." More and more poor people are concentrated in our cities, while more of the new jobs are located in the suburbs, inaccessible by public transportation.

During this decade of increased destitution, a small number of wealthy Americans became even richer. The richest 1 percent of all Americans (those with average incomes of $549,000) now receive nearly as much income, after taxes, as the bottom 40 percent combined. The average income of those at the very top rose $236,000 during the decade—an increase of 75 percent—while the poorest one-fifth of the population saw its income drop by 3.8 percent. A major factor behind this widening gulf is a dramatic increase in capital gains income received by

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the wealthiest Americans, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Last year alone, they received an average of $175,000 in capital gains income alone—$92,000 more than they received in 1980, after adjusting for inflation. Indeed, the share of national income going to those in the middle is now lower than at any time since World War II. Moreover, as we enter a recession, this disparity between wealthy and other Americans is getting worse.

These economic trends and federal policies are reflected in Americans' daily lives and living conditions.

- The nation's infant mortality rate—10 deaths per 1,000 live births—ranks nineteenth in the world, behind those reported by Japan, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. Worse, the infant mortality rate among black Americans (17.6) and within our major cities (for example, 19.7 in Detroit, 19.3 in Washington, D.C., 19.2 in Baltimore, 17.7 in Memphis, 17.3 in Philadelphia, and 16.6 in Chicago) rivals that in many third-world countries.
- About one-fourth of young Americans fail to finish high school. In basic competencies—reading and math, for example—American students (including high school graduates) are far behind their counterparts in other industrial nations. The U.S. ranks nineteenth in teacher/student ratios in public elementary and secondary schools.
- Apart from those who live on the streets or in shelters, millions of Americans live doubled-up or tripled-up in overcrowded apartments, or pay more than they can reasonably afford for substandard housing. Some 85 percent of low-income renters—almost 6 million households—are paying at least 30 percent of their income for housing. Two-thirds of the poor pay at least half of their limited incomes just to keep a roof over their families' heads. Yet fewer than one-third of America's poor receive any kind of housing subsidy. As a result, millions of Americans are just one rent increase, layoff, illness, or other emergency away from becoming homeless. Meanwhile, during the past decade, the homeownership rate steadily declined, especially for young families.

We deserve an America that is at least as strong domestically as it is militarily. What good is a strong defense budget if we don't have a strong America to defend? Persistent poverty is not only a tragic waste of human talent, but also a drain on our nation's productivity. If we are to compete successfully in the new world economy, we must guarantee that our work force is trained, that our research and development dollars strengthen the civilian economy, and that our communities are livable.

The U.S. has the resources to guarantee every American a decent standard of living. What's needed is the national leadership to forge a progressive domestic agenda for economic recovery and social justice, and recognition by the people as well as the leaders that we cannot fight a war against poverty with an all-volunteer army. In his State of the Union address, President Bush said: "If you've got a hammer, find a nail." But nails cost money, and so do bricks and two-by-fours and windowpanes, not to speak of mortgages. Nevertheless, Mr. Bush's budget proposal includes even further housing cuts.

The president's call to conscience is welcome—but we are going to have to invest resources if we are to improve the nation's productivity and meet new economic competition. Just as the 1980s was a decade of disinvestment—a massive federal retreat from our cities—so must the 1990s be a decade of reinvestment. A post-Gulf War economic recovery plan cannot be just a couple of tax breaks and then, hope for the best. We must develop a strategic economic recovery plan for the 1990s that directly addresses the specific needs of America's poor, its working families, and its cities.

Let me suggest four key components of a domestic economic recovery and social justice agenda.

1. Invest in Jobs. We must put Americans back to work by investing in jobs. There is no better anti-poverty program than the dignity of a steady paycheck and a decent job. The federal government must take the lead in priming the pump for economic recovery.

There is plenty of work to do. The U.S. has fallen far behind Japan and Western Europe in its investment in public infrastructure. In the 1980s, public investment in the U.S. fell to half of the 1970s rate, and one-quarter of that during the 1950s and 1960s. We see the results in our communities every day. Now we must start repairing our crumbling infrastructure of bridges, roads, and sewers; improve our mass transit system, including a high-speed rail system between New England and Washington; clean up our physical environment, such as our polluted harbors and rivers; and build affordable housing, by embarking on a large-scale program that offers a significant role to community-based nonprofit builders.

A recent report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) showed that such public investment would improve the overall economy by stimulating private investment, raising private sector productivity, increasing corporate profits and spurring overall growth. EPI found that a dollar spent today on public infrastructure investment produces from two to five times more payoff in GNP growth than a dollar spent on tax cuts or deficit reduction.

A program to construct 1 million single-family homes and apartments a year would generate 1.3 million jobs, $34 billion in wages, and $14 billion in additional federal, state, and local tax revenues—and have significant ripple effects to promote economy recovery.

We must also retool our research-and-development priorities, putting our people and brainpower to work improving our civilian productivity with at least the same commitment that goes into inventing new weapons systems. We particularly underutilize our nation's colleges and universities—especially by neglecting federal investment in research linked to economic progress. Our major international competitors all devote significantly more resources toward civilian R&D, stimulating new businesses and technologies, and then helping to market them in the global economy.

2. Invest in People. The economy of the 1990s will rest on human resources. People and their skills will be the true sources of wealth and competitiveness in the knowledge-driven global economy of the 1990s and beyond. Our education, job training, and human services efforts—all necessary to provide our work force with the skills needed if the U.S. is to compete in the new

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global economy—lag far behind those of our competitors. For example, federal funds for job training were more than cut in half during the past decade; hopes that the private sector would fill the gap were not realized.

We must view the physical and social well-being of our population as a long-term investment. We cannot expect a quick fix to a problem that has been evolving for many years. For example:

- Make Head Start—a proven cost-effective winner in the anti-poverty effort—available to every three- and four-year-old child. Kids that participate in Head Start are more likely to do well in school, stay in school, finish school, and do well later in life, producing great benefits not only for themselves and their families but for their communities and their country. But only about one-quarter of all eligible children can participate because Washington doesn't provide funding. That is shortsighted and it shortchanges our children.
- Enact a national health-care program. The U.S. is one of only two major industrial nations (the other is South Africa) without one. In Canada, for example, access is universal, spending per capita is less, and providers operate with much less paperwork and red tape than their counterparts in this country. Many poor Americans cannot afford to go off welfare because they and their kids would lose medical benefits. We can start by guaranteeing affordable health care for every pregnant woman and every child and by significantly expanding the preventative WIC nutrition program for women and kids. It makes human and fiscal sense; experience shows that an additional dollar spent on prenatal care saves about $3.38 as a result of the reduced rate of low-birthweight babies.
- Retool our job training efforts to provide all Americans with the skills they need so that the U.S. can build the world's foremost work force. That means reaching all young people—in or out of school—with first-class training, while guaranteeing them a decent job upon completion of the training. It also means extending and increasing unemployment benefits to laid-off workers while they are retrained. And it means providing all employers with incentives to invest in ongoing training and education for their work force at all levels.
- Create a national youth service corps that gives high school graduates an opportunity to devote two years to community service—working in our urban neighborhoods and rural areas—for which they'd earn a full college scholarship.

3. Credit Where It's Due. We have to relieve the current credit crunch that is starving our economy of much-needed investment capital to finance job-creating projects and rebuild our urban neighborhoods. In the past, federal policy—for example, tax incentives for corporate relocation, highway building, and the siting of military installations and contracts—promoted the flight of jobs and investment from our cities to sprawling suburbs and even overseas. Today, we need a national policy that encourages investment in cities to help them compete in the global economy. Federal tax policy should stimulate productive investment, not wasteful speculation. Tax incentives to private business should be coupled with public capital and job training in our inner cities to promote economic development. We should also revise federal laws to provide incentives for public and private pension funds to invest in economic development and affordable housing. Recent studies report that our pension funds are joining many American corporations in heading overseas. It's time to bring them home—and put the pensions of American workers to work for American jobs.

Likewise, the federal government needs to get lenders back in the business of financing job-creating investment and home-ownership, not junk bonds and corporate take-overs. One way is for the federal government to insure deposits when funds are used for these specific purposes, but not to insure them for the kind of real estate and corporate speculation that swept the 1980s and helped bring us the current economic crisis.

Federal bank regulators must also enforce the Community Reinvestment Act, which requires lenders to meet the credit needs of low-income and minority neighborhoods. In Boston, we recently used the leverage of CRA—first enacted in 1977 to limit banks' "redlining" practices—to push local banks to create a $400 million community reinvestment program.

4. Fair Federalism. Washington must help ease the staggering financial burden facing cities. Cities house most of America's poor people and are expected to provide them—as well as other city residents—with decent schools, health care, police and fire protection, parks and recreation programs, and other public services. But, as Helen Ladd and John Yinger demonstrated in their recent book *America's Ailing Cities* (Johns Hopkins), our large cities simply lack the resources—the tax base—to do the job. Some cities are on the verge of bankruptcy and many cities are currently laying off teachers, police and firefighters, shutting down schools, hospitals, and recreation programs, and are barely able to perform such housekeeping tasks as filling potholes and plowing snow.

Kathleen T. Choi

City Sermon

Preacher say,
Life's a high rise:
Express ride's shiny silk—
Slips down smooth, too.
Local's restless shoving,
In and out, each floor.
Slow climbing up the back
Means tired legs, locked doors.
But when fire's fingers
Make those grey walls tear,
Only feet still dancing
Be on the iron stair.

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During the 1980s, Washington shifted most of the burden of caring for the poor to cities and states—a scheme one observer has called "fend-for-yourself federalism." But poverty is a national problem, exacerbated by federal policies or inattention. We need a partnership between Washington and the cities—fair federalism.

We should begin giving the cities some financial breathing room by federalizing both Medicaid and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The rapidly rising cost of Medicaid is a major factor in the fiscal crises facing our states. A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston documented that increases in Medicaid costs are pushing out funding for other much-needed programs such as human services and local aid. Federalizing Medicaid must go hand-in-hand with measures to control spiraling health-care costs.

There is no rational basis for the present system of determining AFDC payments, under which the federal government simply matches the amounts set by state governments. Since welfare benefits vary widely from state to state, this results in a crazy-quilt pattern. No state pays enough to keep an AFDC family out of poverty—and benefit levels have declined significantly in the past decade. Nine states pay a maximum benefit of less than a third of the poverty threshold. The accident of geography should not determine whether a child has adequate heat, food, and clothing.

The federal government should establish a national minimum benefit standard for AFDC and food stamps equal to at least the poverty line. At the same time, Washington should reform the welfare system to provide requirements for welfare recipients (except those who are disabled or with infants) to work or participate in job training. That only makes sense, however, if we provide the child care and health benefits that make it rational for welfare recipients to enter the labor market. Most major countries have figured out that it is far more cost-effective to put people to work than to pay unemployment or welfare costs. The U.S. should learn that lesson, too.

If the agenda I have sketched is to be carried out, we will need to take into account public attitudes toward government, the poor, and the proper allocation of national resources. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a concerted effort by conservative think tanks, publications, and pundits, as well as the Reagan administration, to blame government antipoverty programs—and the poor themselves—for the persistence of poverty. This helped justify the past decade of federal disinvestment. Though we may be weary of hearing this, the fight against poverty was never really given a chance to succeed. But those federal programs that *were* given a chance (such as Head Start and WIC) *did* have a big impact. Even at the local level, despite difficult social and financial obstacles, many cities and states over the past decade developed innovative programs that have helped to cushion the blow of the federal retreat.

In Boston, for example, the city's neighborhood health centers have helped reduce the rate of infant mortality. Neighborhood crime-watch groups helped reduce Boston's once-frightening arson rate. Community organizing projects have put pressure on slumlords and banks to improve local housing conditions. A network of nonprofit, community-based housing groups, supported by local government, banks, and foundations, has built or rehabilitated thousands of homes for poor and working-class families. To enlist the federal government in the expansion of this concept, I drafted a bill, the Community Housing Partnership Act, which was introduced in the House by Representative Joseph Kennedy (D-Mass.) and eventually incorporated into the omnibus housing bill passed by Congress and signed by the president last year. Though far from adequately funded, this legislation recognizes the national interest in the creation of more and better housing, and the necessity of allocating federal funds for this purpose—but without involving federal agencies in micromanagement of local housing programs. Instead it puts money into the hands of local nonprofit community organizations: those who best understand what most needs doing in this place and time, and how best to do it.

To the extent that the results of efforts like these are known and appreciated, they help to restore public confidence in our nation's ability to come to grips with its problems. Americans will pay their fair share of taxes if they know that programs can be cost-effective and successful in promoting economic recovery, providing services, and combating poverty.

To build the political will for an adequate domestic agenda we must also make our political processes more accessible and responsive than they are. The existing hodge-podge of barriers to voter registration contributes to our scandalously low voter turnout, especially among young people, the poor, and minorities—precisely those citizens most in need of adequate representation. Our campaign finance system hurts the same constituencies by greatly increasing the leverage of moneyed interests in our ever costlier election campaigns. Together, these abuses help to insulate many elected officials from the concerns of ordinary voters. Consider the strange case of the Brady Bill, a mild-to-moderate gun control proposal that has been repeatedly shoved aside and at this writing is still not assured of passage despite overwhelming support among the general public and from law-enforcement agencies—all through the efforts of a single well-heeled lobby. Preaching democracy as the cure for problems all over the world, we are stifling democracy at home.

But efforts to correct these weaknesses will meet resistance, and so will any serious programs to address our domestic problems. It is in the interest of some Americans to mislabel the political task of the decade; they say we need to "get the government off our backs." The real problem is to get the federal government on our side. That requires tallying up the disastrous effects our distorted national priorities are inflicting on our economy and our people. For too long, we've had welfare for the wealthy—the defense contractors, the savings-and-loan industry, big corporations, and the very rich—and crumbs for the rest. This—not social spending for needy and working families—is a major cause of our federal deficit. Because of these misplaced priorities, we've been unable to fund the kinds of

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efforts that are urgently needed to rebuild our economy, our businesses, and our cities.

Getting our priorities straight means recognizing what we can and cannot afford. We cannot afford the toll that poverty is taking on our families, the effects of bad schools, bad housing, poor nutrition and health care, lack of jobs, low pay and little opportunity at what jobs are offered, denial of funds for treatment of drug addiction and other remedial programs, and all the other conditions that impact most directly on the poorest but are rapidly spreading upward through the working and middle classes. We cannot afford the consequences: burgeoning costs for treatment of preventable health problems; the rising burden of new jails, prisons, prosecutors, judges; business failures rising out of the shrinking of the average customer's disposable income, the impact of crime, the absence of trained or trainable workers, the effects of poor or no maintenance on roads, highways, bridges, and other public facilities, the indispensable foundation of a flourishing commerce. If only in our own interest, we cannot afford to write off generations of young people to poverty, hopelessness, drugs, and crime.

Once the costs of inaction are seen, it becomes instantly clear that we *can* afford to invest in opportunity, productivity, and fairness. A combination of progressive tax reform and cuts in military spending can provide the resources needed to start the job, and the return on investment that will follow out of economic recovery will more than suffice to sustain the effort. It is the safest of predictions: We will pay now, or we will pay later, at a far higher cost in dollars and in human lives.

GIVE ME SHELTER

PROFITS & CODE VIOLATIONS IN THE BRONX

JOHN J. PIDERIT

The average homeowner considers hot water an amenity over which she has complete control. If the hot water heater does not work, she gets it repaired immediately. Similarly, the owner of a condominium or cooperative expects any interruptions in the provision of hot water to be brief and infrequent. Someone who rents an apartment and is without hot water, however, has two problems: the lack of hot water and the need to deal with an intermediary, the landlord, who may not be concerned about the provision of hot water, or any number of other amenities. The following story of one group of tenants in a building located in the Fordham-Bedford section of the Bronx (the North Bronx, not the much maligned South Bronx), New York, reveals the difficulties that plague poor and low-income tenants who live in urban areas, especially an area where real estate speculation is rife.

Facing on distinguished St. James Park and opposite the Jerome Avenue elevated train, the building on Morris Avenue is the only multifamily dwelling on a block of row houses. My information about the saga of its residents comes from an officer of its tenants' association, a person who has also been active in promoting decent housing in the area. She worked for the Northwest Bronx Coalition, with which I have had a close working relationship.

JOHN J. PIDERIT, S.J., *was for many years the president of a housing corporation in the Bronx. An economist, he is currently corporate vice-president at Marquette University in Milwaukee.*

This story is all the more poignant because the tenants have been organized for ten years working to secure reasonable housing conditions. They are not an aimless and disparate group. The building's thirty apartments are occupied largely by working-class families and are predominantly Puerto Rican. One-third of the tenants qualify for Section 8 housing supplements (under this federal subsidy program, severely curtailed since the Reagan administration, tenants pay a fixed percentage, 33 percent, of their monthly income for rent, even if their wages are modest; in this way, livable and affordable housing is made available to working families). A few families are on welfare. The president of the tenants' association is a black mother in her thirties with four children; the vice-president is a Puerto Rican gentleman in his fifties.

In 1984 the building had so many violations of city housing codes that the tenants requested that a 7A administrator (the name derives from the pertinent code in housing law) be appointed to oversee the building. In deciding whether to designate a 7A administrator, the judge must determine whether apartment conditions are hazardous to human health and safety, that is, the situation is sufficiently serious to warrant a direct intrusion into an owner's control of his or her property. The primary responsibility of a 7A administrator is to insure that all serious code violations are eliminated. All rent revenues must be used to repair and maintain the building, not to pay off the mortgage or taxes.

In their appeal for a 7A administrator, the Morris Avenue tenants' organization contacted the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), New York City's housing

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agency, which, among other duties, is charged with assisting tenants in securing adequately maintained housing and enforcing the housing code. Acceding to the requests of the tenant organization, HPD petitioned the court for a 7A administrator. They were successful and an able administrator was appointed. By 1986, the administrator had removed most of the violations against the building. In the meantime the landlord decided to sell the building. The tenants offered to buy it, but the landlord refused to sell to them. Instead, in 1986 he sold the building to a third party, Mr. C, who owns approximately eighty other buildings in the Bronx. The new owner went to court and argued that he would be as good a manager as the 7A administrator and should be given the chance to demonstrate his ability.

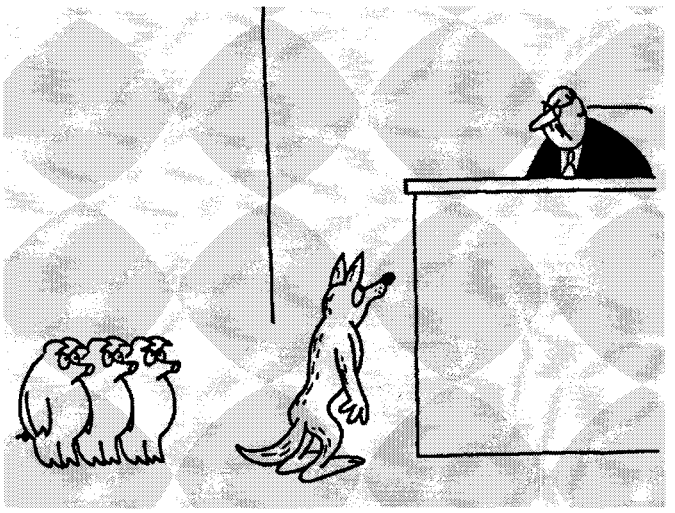
Once Mr. C had secured ownership of the building without the appointment of the administrator, he failed to make the repairs he had promised the court to undertake. Not only did he not install new plumbing in many of the apartments, he also neglected the general upkeep of the apartments. Plaster began to fall off walls and ceilings, and in one case, a child was injured by a chunk of ceiling plaster and had to be taken to the hospital. Although Mr. C was putting very little money into the building's upkeep and improvement, within a year he was able to obtain a federally secured mortgage for $290,000 on the building that he had purchased for $220,000.

By 1989, conditions had deteriorated severely. During the spring, there was no hot water two or three days a week, and in the summer the tenants went without it for weeks. Complaints to the manager and landlord were noted. Tenants were promised that management would address the problems immediately. But nothing was done. Conditions continued to worsen: There were leaks in the ceilings, an infestation of mice, and because the building's outside doors were not secure, drug dealers began using the hallways. The tenants asked HPD to petition the court to reinstall the 7A administrator, but HPD balked. Even though the building had hundreds of code violations, including serious ones, the authorities at HPD did not think that a 7A administrator was required.

On August 6, 1989, a neighborhood youth forced a young woman, who was to begin college in the fall, into the apartment building through the broken doors, led her to the roof, and hurled her to her death. Tenants and neighbors were certain they knew who committed the murder, but there was insufficient evidence for prosecution. Tenants demonstrated outside the office of HPD and demanded that their building be made safe and sound; with reluctance, HPD consented to bring suit.

Not until after Christmas 1989, four months later, did HPD complete the paperwork to file for a 7A administrator. At the court hearing at the end of January 1990, the judge postponed the hearing for sixty days, giving Mr. C a chance both to respond to the tenants' allegations and to eliminate some or all of the code violations.

The frustrated tenants became even more assiduous in noting violations. Code violations are categorized by the response time allowed for their removal. An A violation is the least serious



"We have laws against blowing down houses, you know!"

and the landlord has several months to eliminate it. The most serious, a C violation, is defined as a condition immediately hazardous to human health and safety and it must be removed within five days. Whenever a suspected code violation occurred, the tenants called a city inspector, who, to the agency's credit, visited the building and conscientiously verified and recorded the violation. Approximately sixty C violations were recorded during the next three months.

One of the tenants even kept a "hot water journal" during the month of March. For fifteen days there was no hot water for at least half of the day. For seven days, the water was so cold that no one could shower any time during the day.

After two postponements prior to a trial, the tenants met with HPD commissioners to voice their grievances over the manner in which HPD was handling their complaints. By that time, Mr. C had taken advantage of the postponements to remove, at least temporarily, some of the C violations; but he had done a shoddy job, and a few hundred A and B violations still remained. Mr. C's previous behavior indicated that once the court decided in his favor he would discontinue repairs and allow C-level violations to accumulate again. The tenants hoped that their HPD lawyer would be adamant in demanding that a 7A administrator be appointed. Instead, the lawyer was ordered by his boss to drop the case because it was without merit.

As the tenants predicted, one day after the case was dropped, June 10, 1990, the hot water was turned off and all repairs ceased. Hot water did not flow again until August, and then only intermittently. In early September, the tenants suffered a new form of harassment: for six days half of the tenants were without any cold water, including toilet water. In desperation, the tenants initiated a rent strike and attempted to bring the violations to the attention of the court. Hot water was provided sporadically (three or four days a week, a couple of hours a day). Just before Christmas 1990, a judge visited the building to verify the conditions of neglect; since that time, hot water has been available every day, twenty-four hours a day.

At the same time that the legal action involving HPD was

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underway, the tenants themselves sent a letter to Mr. C listing particularly onerous violations and noting their grievances. The letter was sent by certified mail on May 15 and received in Mr. C's office three days later. That day, Mr. C came to the building and, without informing the tenants, ripped out the TV antennae, an amenity that a landlord is not required to make available to tenants, off the roof. The following day he served new legal papers to reinstate a case, which had no legal merit, against the tenant who had written the letter of complaint on behalf of all the tenants. The aim was pure harassment.

Among landlords renting to low-income tenants, Mr. C. would not be considered the exception to the norm in the North Bronx. He is not among the best, nor is he among the worst. At least people in his apartments get heat and hot water many days. The story of the tenants in Mr. C's building occurs, however, hundreds of times throughout New York City and in thousands of other rental units across the United States.

The most depressing facet of the story is the length of time the tenants spent trying to obtain reasonable housing conditions. During any given year, from 1984 until the present, numerous and serious code violations against the building existed. When he purchased the building, Mr. C agreed to remove all violations. Yet, despite repeated attempts by a well-organized group of tenants, the tenants were unable to get the violations removed. Outsiders often assume that the poor are unconcerned about the environment in which they live, that they are content to live in substandard conditions, or that they are not aggressive in fighting for their rights. After years of concern and confrontation without gaining any satisfaction, a reasonable person, who years earlier may have joined the tenant organization with some reservations, might be tempted to conclude that it is not worth fighting any more since the system itself is corrupt. "Corrupt" may be too strong a word, since, at least in this story, there is no evidence of money changing hands in order to prevent the law from taking its course. Nonetheless, the system is insidious because it prevents legitimate grievances from being righted.

Mr. C might well retort that the system is ultimately fair because he also had grievances that were not corrected. In particular, he would undoubtedly complain that, because of rent stabilization and crime in the area, he was unable to make a reasonable rate of return on his investment. Cutting corners in repairing C-level violations was his way of making sure that he obtained at least a minimal rate of return.

But don't Mr. C's contentions miss the point? He was fully aware of rent stabilization and crime in the area when he purchased his building. Even if he could not know precisely how much the Rent Guidelines Board would allow landlords to raise rents, he must have made a reasonable guess. Similarly, he must have estimated how much money he would have to spend to make the building secure. On the basis of those estimates, he paid $220,000 for the building. If he bid correctly, Mr. C should have been able to make a normal rate of return on his investment. This should be so even if he barely covered his costs in any given year. In fact, most landlords of rent-stabilized or rent-controlled buildings make their profit not on the annual rent roll but on the capital appreciation of the building when it is sold.

If, prior to purchasing the building, Mr. C thought that he could only earn 3 percent per year on the building, he should have invested his money in some other area of the city or some other venture. Indeed, had he done this, the tenants themselves would have been able to purchase the building. But Mr. C either thought he paid a fair price or was convinced that he had a bargain. He cannot argue *ex post facto* that rent increases have been low and damage to the building high. He knew these things before he purchased the building. In fact, prior to the purchase he was aware of all the violations and must have used this information to bargain with the previous owner to lower the price.

Mr. C was able to purchase the building at a low price because it was in such poor condition. By not removing the code violations, Mr. C acted unjustly toward his tenants. As I write, Mr. C has

Joan I. Siegel

Doors

(For Marian Clarke)

"I don't like these houses
where you enter and exit from the same door,"
says the Jamaican girl
cramped in the August blight
of a tenement afternoon in Queens.

In Kingston
you enter through doors
thrown open like wide arms.

You move through spacious rooms
peopled with generations
of brown-legged children and uncles at dominoes
a grandmother stewing herbs to cure belly ache
a mother shaking out white linen
a great aunt asleep on bright pillows
beside the window
and a hot breeze lifts the curtain edge
like a fan.

You move from room to room
slowly
at ease
gathering the smell of stillness
at midafternoon
and exit through the back door
step into the shade of frangipani
the smell of hibiscus
and the sea carried lightly on the air.

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put the building on the market for $650,000. Even if it sells for only $550,000, he will have secured a gross rate of return of 150 percent over three years.

Mr. C's case is illustrative of a widespread general pattern that prevails in many U.S. cities. As such, it tells us something significant about housing structures in our society. Despite the good intentions of individuals, the system itself is unfair and unjust. In too many instances, city, state, and federal housing agencies, and occasionally the court system itself, do not mediate claims fairly. In the end, it is always real people who suffer the consequences.

In New York City, HPD has an interest in working constructively with landlords, since landlords make housing available to residents whom the HPD serves. Where HPD can cooperate with landlords, it should. But HPD should act decisively when landlords abuse tenants. Instead, in Mr. C's case, HPD chose either to ignore or to declare void the valid complaints of the tenants. HPD had a responsibility to force Mr. C to comply, even if previously he had a reputation for being a "reasonable" landlord.

Such problems are less likely to arise in apartment buildings occupied by middle-class and upper middle-class tenants, unless the buildings are rent controlled or stabilized. The tenants in those buildings have a choice, which exerts pressure on the landlord to maintain a building so that people are willing to rent. A person with financial means can move if she dislikes the service in her building. Indeed, she can move quickly if she is really perturbed at the management. An elderly person, whose apartment is rent controlled, has less ability to move. But, provided she has adequate resources, she too can move. She may not like paying the rent in the new apartment building, but she can obtain reasonable housing.

The poor and the working class are more likely to live in rent-controlled or rent-stabilized apartments. For them, to leave one building means that they will have to find another that suits their needs. Those needs often dictate relocating to a building with Section 8 subsidies (harder than ever to procure), one that is close to public transportation for work and shopping. The pool of available buildings is smaller for the poor than for the middle and upper classes. In a place like New York City, the problem is particularly acute because the vacancy rate is only 2 percent. (And if one is restricted to nonluxury rental housing, the vacancy rate is close to 0 percent.)

The poor and working class will continue to face serious obstacles in procuring adequate housing. The reason is that safe housing and good public schools in poor neighborhoods are in short supply. When an urban family of moderate means finds a safe building and a good school, they have unearthed pearls of great price. Even if the landlord does not provide hot water, they would rather fight than flee. There are few other places of refuge.

In addition to their limited options for housing, the poor and working classes do not have recourse to effective legal counsel when a dispute arises. In many cases, a middle-class family needs only to threaten legal action in order to get results from a landlord. This is especially true if the landlord suspects that the aggrieved petitioner is likely to find support among other tenants in the building. The poor, however, cannot exercise this type of leverage. Their threat to sue is not credible, either because they cannot afford a quality lawyer or because the lawyers provided to the poor through various city organizations are also directed to cooperate with landlords. In short, the poor are not only financially restricted but also lack legal resources. Unless the plaintiff and respondent have legal counsel of approximately equal talent and loyalty to their clients, the would-be plaintiffs (the poor) will, on average, fare poorly in a court of law.

If a city cannot offer sufficient choice in housing to its dwellers, or cannot provide quality legal counsel for those with legitimate housing grievances, the system itself is not structurally just. Under circumstances of poverty and inadequate supply, justice can only be achieved if everyone—landlords, tenants, and lawyers—agrees to certain common standards or values. In today's modern cities, the price mechanism and the adversarial legal process guarantee that justice will not be served. □

SCREEN

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

'GRIFTERS,' 'L.A. STORY' & 'MALL'

Director Stephen Frears's *The Grifters* is a magnificent slice of sleaze. It will surely make you smile. Or is it just Annette Bening who does that? Bening plays the wanton Myra, a con artist of limited range but unyielding ambition. Bening is a brave actress, and she almost gives depravity a good name. Myra has the frank sexuality of a barnyard animal, and ingratiates herself with the favor of sex the way most people use a smile. Her seduction of a weak-willed landlord is a little piece of comic perfection, as indeed is her entire giggling, bouncing, ever-eager presence. Bening would steal the movie but for the formidable presence of Anjelica Huston, who wears her own, more harrowing desperation.

Grifters concerns the precarious schemes of Huston, her son Roy, played by John Cusack, and Bening, as Cusack's calculating love interest. Roy has inherited his youthful mother's instinct for larceny. He makes a modest living bilking strangers of petty cash, or outwitting other small-time gamblers. Happenstance brings him and his estranged mother Lilly together again when she arrives in Southern California to work the local race track for her Mafia bosses. Roy is resentful and antagonistic toward Lilly's attempts to reclaim a measure of affection. Some of the movie's most electric scenes take place early on as Huston and Cusack spar mercilessly, using every immediate grievance to avenge old and abiding injuries. Instinctively, one's empathy is with the rejected mother trying to atone for her sins and reclaim her offspring. Only as the film reaches its chilling climax does it become apparent how sound her son's suspicions were.

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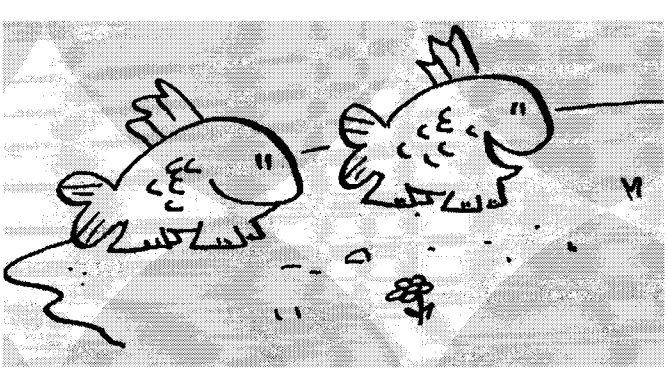
Sigmund Freud may have written the screenplay. (Actually it was mystery writer Donald Westlake, from a novel by the pulp writer Jim Thompson.)

As a number of critics have noted, *The Grifters* is not a large story but a finely wrought miniature, etched with superlative performances from nearly everyone involved. Huston does a sly homage to her father John Huston's masterful portrayal of the predatory patriarch in *Chinatown*, and she is every bit as poisonous and frightening. Cusack is disciplined and appealing as usual, and suffers only from the story's necessary subordination of his character. Director Frears keeps a tight rein on things, and the dialogue is as sharp as the speakers are tawdry. This movie does not disappoint.

L.A. Story is a slight but very funny valentine written by and starring the comedian and actor Steve Martin (*Roxanne*). Like *The Grifters*, it also will make you smile—and howl, at least for the first half-hour. Martin has filled this grab bag of a romantic comedy with enough good jokes to last most comics a lifetime. As the credits roll and Maurice Chevalier sings "La Mer," we are plunged into all the ditzy incongruities of life in Los Angeles. You might think it impossible to say anything else funny about L.A. freeways or weather but Martin does. *L.A. Story*'s visual and verbal wit is sustained at a very high level—"Hello, I'm Bob, I'll be your robber tonight," says a laid-back California gunman. What is missing is a story of even minimal dramatic interest.

Martin is paying an obvious debt to Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, with its famous Allen put-down of California's beguiling superficiality. Martin, who grew up in Los Angeles, is content to be beguiled, if not bewitched. He is rarely bothered by Los Angeles's ardent artificiality—instead he celebrates its open-ended, quintessentially American character. You can start your life over again any warm, sunny day.

Martin's wife, Victoria Tennant, plays the Annie Hall character. She arrives in L.A., replete with Diane Keaton-like hat and offish charm, as a journalist from London. She and Martin meet over brunch, in a scene whose affectionate pilloring of Southern California manners is a comic tour de force. With the feeble assistance of an electronic freeway sign, Martin pursues his infatuation. Unfortunately, the romance is much more real to him than to the movie audience. Tennant is a tolerable fixture, but she is no comedian, and the effort to divinize her fails. Luckily, Martin keeps the jokes coming, and sprinkles his story with eccentric characters, both winsome and bathetic. Sarah Jessica Parker plays a carefree, virtually incoherent Valley Girl who embodies all of California's promise of pleasure without complication and complication without significance. She's captivating.



"Let's enjoy this place while we can, before everybody *finds out about it."*

America is about play, Martin seems to be saying, and we should accept this Eden for the gift it is. His absurdist humor has always hinted that we live in an inauthentic world that overwhelms us with images, things, and imagined possibilities. Our situation is as silly as it is unmanageable. Sexual love offers a refuge from that disorienting carnival. But as attractive as that familiar idea is, its egregious sentimentality also helps to explain the movie's final emptiness.

Given Martin's oblique retort to Woody Allen, it is interesting to find Allen driving a Saab convertible and gobbling sushi among the potted palms in director Paul Mazursky's *Scenes from a Mall*. Mazursky takes marriage and sex seriously (as "life problems"), as his films *An Unmarried Woman* and *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice* fitfully testify. He also takes California seriously. Here he has the wit to pair Allen with Bette Midler, as a troubled (momentarily at least) Southern California couple. The match seems uncannily right, even if little comes of it. Allen shows some surprising gravitas as a hard-nosed lawyer, although he doesn't ever really escape the Woody persona. How could he? Midler plays it loud and brassy, familar tones for her. Still, she's plausible as a well-meaning psychiatrist who, like her husband, can't say no to the siren call of self-fulfillment.

Allen and Midler are middle-aged and well-to-do, with two adolescent children, matching automobiles, a surfeit of disposable income, and fairly commonplace sexual wanderlust. During a holiday shopping trip to a local mall, Allen confesses to infidelity, suffers the inevitable recriminations, and is forgiven, only to have Midler subsequently plead guilty to the same. Setting the action in the phantasmagoria of an upperscale mall thronged with patrons, carolers, and idle voyeurs is a clever idea. But it seems to be Mazursky's only idea. Like most Americans, our couple tries to assuage their sorrows by spending money. Transcendence beckons from every dress and suit rack, every overpriced delicacy or fashionable trinket. Like all binges, this proves therapeutic but the effect is short-lived.

Mazursky can't really satirize these lives because he reveres the fashionable angst that characterizes them. We are caught up in the couple's obvious pain, but the movie has no idea of what to do with their putative sins. Beyond the psychoanalytical notion that speaking of hidden things enables us to understand them, there are few other rituals of accountability or reconciliation. Consequently, there is plenty of yelling, crying, and cursing, but little action or dramatic movement. Essentially, these are lives where truth has no consequences—only money or the lack of it does. Southern California seems to be like that, unless you're a grifter.

PAUL BAUMANN

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BEYOND THE MESA

'SPEED OF DARKNESS' & 'NIRVANA'

Steve Tesich told a *New York Times* interviewer (March 12, 1991) that "the only thing I will write for the theater is something that involves a moral issue. Nothing else interests me." There is a moral issue or two or three in his new play, *The Speed of Darkness*. New to New York, that is. An earlier version was performed at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 1989 and was published in *American Theatre* (July/August 1989). A play about the personal and public consequences of the Vietnam War, it comes to Broadway at an odd time, when the country is riding high on the American triumph in the Persian Gulf, which presumably erased the stigma of defeat in Vietnam as though the divisiveness that that war visited on the country had to do only with defeat or victory, not with the fact of the war itself. As the Middle East settles back into being the Middle East—whatever the new alliances, the new governments—and the new world aborning begins to look more and more like the old one, the euphoria is sure to melt away. That might be the moment for *The Speed of Darkness*.

An old-fashioned play, full of hidden secrets that will be revealed as it progresses, *Speed* concerns two Vietnam veterans, battlefront buddies. Joe has become a successful businessman, newly chosen as South Dakota Man of the Year, and a family man with a daughter (although technically not his) he dotes on. Lou has become one of the walking wounded, a slightly disconnected ("When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw") member of the army of the homeless, trailing around the country following a tour of the replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall. That Joe is not all that his surface stability suggests can be seen in the moments of anger—often aimed at his community—which burst through his façade; that Lou is more than he seems becomes clear in his obvious attempt to manipulate Joe into some action not immediately apparent. It turns out (well, there go the secrets, but knowing them never hurt audiences at Ibsen's plays) that their unit was caught in a chemical drop—what we now call "friendly fire" in an attempt to make death almost cozy—and that, although they were rescued and detoxed, they became sterile in the process. In the first anger of their return, they worked as trash collectors—and incidentally as vengeance collectors—punishing the society that crippled them by pouring toxic waste into ravines on the mesa beyond the town. With the prospect that the mesa is to be developed, Joe sounds like a concerned ecologist, wanting to keep some part of the environment from the greed of developers; but Lou, in the play's grandest melodramatic gesture, accepts the guilt for what they have done and demands, by his suicide, that Joe do the same. At a final public meeting, during which we see Joe situated alone in a spotlight, he explains what they have done, asks the community's forgiveness, and says, haltingly, "I forgive you." This is not exactly a healing of society's wounds, since those words eventually banish Joe and his family.

Dramatically more interesting than the vast shared guilt of Joe's confession is Lou as an accusing figure, an image for all the homeless. Of course, he is a friend of Joe's and he becomes an uneasy fixture in the family very quickly. The connection between Joe and Lou aside, as a presence on stage, Lou seems by his dislocation to mock their closeness even while he takes joy in it. He is given most of the funny business (some of it painful), and he has a long (and extraneous) set piece on the usefulness for the homeless of traditional over modern sculpture as sleeping space.

A great many important points are touched in the play, but it is never as strong as Tesich's desire to say something important. Len Cariou gives a solid, perhaps too big performance as Joe, which is highly effective, but I find myself wishing I had seen Bill Raymond, who played the part in Chicago. He had a different intensity. Stephen Lang, who created Lou originally, is back in the role, giving one of those flamboyant, tic-ridden, audience-pleasing readings of his, this one even more annoying to me than his deranged colonel in *And a Few Good Men*. And the play does milk its effects. The narrator (the daughter's high-school sweetheart a few years later) says, at the end of his opening monologue, "They used to live right here," and in the Broadway (if not the published) version, the play ends on the same sentence. It is too pat, too neat, too like Tesich.

Except for the film *Breaking Away*, the Tesich works I have seen—from *Lake of the Woods* (1971) to *Division Street* (1980), which has its charms—have always suggested a kind of overreaching. By comparison, Arthur Kopit is a playwright whose work genuinely engages me—*Indians, Wings, The End of the World*—so I find myself uneasy talking seriously about Tesich when there is a new Kopit play. *Road to Nirvana*, however, is a great disappointment. First performed as *Bone-the-Fish* in Louisville in 1989, it may intend to say something important about the American desire for money and success and what one sacrifices for it. (Jerry lets himself be castrated to get a contract for a rock-star movie.) It sounds like an unsuccessful parody of David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow*, which apparently did drive Kopit to his typewriter. Kopit's movie hustlers are cartoons, where Mamet's are men driven to act like cartoons; and Kopit, whose other plays show such a mastery of varying stage voices, gets the words but not the music of Mamet's poetic obscenity. I had been warned that Kopit's play was disgusting or worse, but what it is, which is worse, is tedious. So much talk on the long road to getting neutered.

GERALD WEALES

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With roots in the bog

SELECTED POEMS, 1966-1987
Seamus Heaney
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $20, 256 pp.

Edward T. Wheeler

To read Seamus Heaney's *Selected Poems* is to be inundated: bogs threaten, well bottoms reflect, and Ireland as a place seems to exist only as skin on the Atlantic Ocean. Heaney pulls out of a primordial soup a unique creation; he forms himself and his world from Irish peat by speaking enlivening words. There is little to laugh over in these poems, straining as his lines often do in an iambic harness against the traditional forms he so easily adapts. The vision can mount affirmation, but the affirmations ride at the edges of apprehension:

> Once we presumed to found ourselves for good
> Between the blue hills and those sandless shores
> Where we spent our desperate night in prayer and vigil.
>
> Once we had gathered driftwood, made a hearth
> And hung out cauldron like a firmament,
> The island broke beneath us like a wave.
>
> The land sustaining us seemed to hold firm
> Only when we embraced it *in extremis*.
> All I believe that happened there was vision.

This is "Disappearing Island," the last poem in the volume, and it embodies most of what makes Heaney so terribly good a poet: vision, sense of place, of barbaric origins and of Latin roots. He creates a simultaneity: mythic past and bloody present, Celtic or Viking violence and prod or provo death squads. As a poet Heaney has had to decide on what his roots into that Irish bog mean: Irish/English is a linguistic dilemma no matter what it is as a political one. In a fundamental way, as in his translation of the old Irish *Buile Suibhne (Sweeney Astray)*, Heaney renames himself, to face that Celtic self and not choke on English words. That tension gives us poems which speak the poet who lovingly parses the sound of the Irish proper names for English ears:

> Anahorish, soft gradient
> of consonant, vowel meadow ...

or again:

> ... *Broagh*
> its low tattoo
> among the windy boortrees
> and rhubarb-blades
>
> ended almost
> suddenly, like that last
> *gh* the strangers found
> difficult to manage.

Heaney works over the Old English kenning, *ban hus*, and gives another example of his playing with language to get at his poetic self through "antediluvian lore":

> I push back
> through dictions ...
>
> To the scops's
> twang, the iron
> flash of consonants
> cleaving the line.
>
> In the coffered
> riches of grammar
> and declensions
> I found *ban hus* ...

Ban Hus or *bone house* or "man": a spelling way to create a self, to rescue from Irish/English past a workable relationship to today. Ultimately, in *Station Island*, twelve poems linked to the ancient "penitential exercises" conducted on that island and to Dante's *Commedia*, a Joyce-cum-Virgil admonishes the poet to return to the world and believe:

> "The English language
> belongs to us. You are raking at dead fires...
>
> That subject people stuff is a cod's game,
> infantile, like this peasant pilgrimage.
>
> You lose more of your self than you redeem
> doing the decent thing ...
>
> fill the element

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with signatures on your own frequency
echo-soundings, searches, probes, allurements,

ever-gleams in the dark of the whole sea."

Heaney is at his most impressive when he tunes his "frequency" to a reception of simultaneity, connecting "ever- gleams," myth, history, and "the troubles." "Sandstone Keepsake" begins with the thing, "chalky russet/ solidified gourd," returns to the sandstone rock's place of discovery at Inishowen and then through allusion to Phlegethon and to Guy de Montfort's damned red heart opens to a thoroughly contemporary and military perspective:

Anyhow, there I was with the wet red stone
in my hand, staring across at the watch-towers
from my free state of image and allusion,
swooped on, then dropped by trained binoculars:

a silhouette not worth bothering about,
out for the evening in scarf and waders
and not about to set times wrong or right,
stooping along, one of the venerators.

The poet self-deprecatingly reads in response to the Joycean celebration of "signatures of all things ... seaspawn and seawrack" the ineffectual sign of the self in time. Quite a bardic stance.

In the same way that he can be said to be post-Romantic, Heaney is post-Catholic, indebted but capable of using the old forms of discourse only to respond to a former self. He offers not so much a Wordsworthian myth of memory as a salvation history—up to a second Fall. He writes of a boyhood lived in devout terror, at faith itself and at Catholicism in Northern Ireland. The terror gives way to the adult accommodation but leaves the imprint of a sacramental vision. We hear again and again moving assertions of the efficacy of signs, especially of words:

Visitations are taken for signs.
At a second house I listened
for duntings under the laurels
and heard intimations whispered
about being vaguely honored.

And to read even by carcasses
the badgers have come back.

"The Badgers" mixes the shapes of those slain in sectarian violence with the shapes of returning badgers and moves to a question: "How perilous is it to choose/not to love the life we're shown?" And so we learn the price of sacrificial oblation.

Everywhere his landscape overcomes him, makes him define his poetic vocation almost in terms of possession, by words, by signs:

Sensings, mountings from the hiding places,
Words entering almost the sense of touch
Ferret themselves out of their dark hutch—
"These things are not secrets but mysteries ..."

In such a world the poet can only hope to raise a voice which might:

... continue, hold, dispel, appease:
Vowels ploughed into other, opened ground
Each verse returning like the plough turned round.

A priestly mission, a humble plodding simile, a poet of land and mystery who faces an imminence at once holy and yet never divine. There is a unitive way in his contemplation of nature, but the book of creation can suddenly turn the writer into the text he creates. In "The King of the Ditchbacks" what starts as close observation of water fowl becomes obsession and then transformation.

No birds came, but I waited

among briars and stones, or whispered
or broke the watery gossamers

if I moved a muscle.
"Come back to us," they said, "in harvest,

when we hide in the stooked corn,
when the gundogs can hardly retrieve

what's brought down." And I saw myself
rising to move in that dissimulation,

top-knotted, masked in sheaves, noting
the fall of birds: a rich young man

leaving everything he had
for a migrant solitude.

Heaney *can* be, almost, conversational; he writes fluidly of ruined summer holidays, marital tiffs, the trials of being a famous Irish poet and fair game for reporters hungry for copy, but his poetry is almost always sacred text. He knows his sources, the liturgical roots of his style and poetic:

Intransitively we would assist,
confess, receive. The verbs
assumed us. We adored.

And we lifted our eyes to the nouns.
Altar stone was dawn and monstrance noon,
the word "rubric" itself a bloodshot sunset.

What can any merely natural world be in contrast to this founding vision of signs operating beyond sense, of transubstantiation by efficacious word? Literally *unbelief*:

and even the range wall of the promenade

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that I press down on for conviction
hardly tempts me to credit it.

In that hard singing school of Irish poets, Heaney has learned all the lessons. He was professor of poetry at Oxford for good reason. With the consciousness of blood, of bone, of language and religion, he can reflect on his earthly home, that muddied bog and if only for a moment give us a pure source:

That eternal fountain, hidden away,
I know its haven and its secrecy
although it is the night.

But not its source because it does not have one,
which is all sources' source and origin
although it is the night.

What we are to make of the antiphonal qualification, "although it is the night," finally comes to some dark sense in conclusion to "Station Island" XI:

Hear it calling out to every creature
And they drink these waters, although it is dark
because it is the night.

I am repining for this living fountain
Within this bread of life I see it plain
although it is the night.

What we admire in all this, he tells us most clearly in "The Master":

Deliberately he would unclasp
his book of withholding
a page at a time, and it was nothing
arcane, just the old rules ...

Tell the truth. Do not be afraid.

And that truth he tells us perhaps comes most pointedly home in "Haw Lantern," which reads the sign of the shriveled fruit of the hawthorne tree, "a small light for small people." But in the moral vision that Heaney speaks "when your breath plumes in the frost," seeing the thing is reflection and judgment. The haw fruit becomes Diogenes's lamp lighting his quest for the honest or just man:

he holds up at eye-level on its twig,
and you flinch before its bonded pith and stone,
its blood-prick that you wish would test and clear you,
its pecked-at ripeness that scans you, then moves on.

Reading Seamus Heaney's poems leaves you mired with the sense of Adam before a fallen world, and washed in the consciousness of what is justly gone. The toil of life becomes something like that of refiguring what was said behind those closed gates and, despite fratricide, signing the truth of mortality. □

BACK TO THE FUTURE

THE TRUE AND ONLY HEAVEN
Progress and Its Critics
Christopher Lasch
Norton, $25, 591 pp.

Wilson Carey McWilliams

For almost three decades now, Christopher Lasch has been taking the measure of America's political soul, writing with grace and learning and relentless integrity, an academic Orwell, eccentric in the best sense, the voice of no party and for all seasons. His latest, *The True and Only Heaven*, is a grand, rambling book—or even, several books. It is full of sorties and byways, ventures into economic theory, social criticism, and democratic doctrine, with brief essays, as polished as cameos, on figures as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, Henry George, Georges Sorel, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Lasch takes his title from Hawthorne's "Celestial Railroad," but Hawthorne himself looked back to Bunyan, so it is appropriate that Lasch begins by tracing his own quest for the intellectual grail: *The True and Only Heaven* is a *Pilgrim's Progress* for the late twentieth century, its theme defined by Lasch's inquiry into the idea of progress and its critics.

Growing out of the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the doctrine of progress reflected the new conviction that human beings could and should aspire to master nature. Insatiable desire came to be regarded as natural and welcome, the motive force of a process that made old luxuries into present necessities. In this view, in fact, there is no luxury, strictly speaking: The idea of excess implies limits in nature, a human place in the order of things, where modernity's mainstream held that if there is any such order, it is morally nugatory, since human beings are not to obey nature but to rule.

Today, Lasch argues, that terrestrial highway is coming to a dead end as human beings face the finitude of the planet and its fragility. Meanwhile, the large-scale organizations and governments associated with the pursuit of growth are top-heavy schools of human debilitation, caught in a dialectic that sets domination from the top against servile irresponsibility below. This is the logic of the Enlightenment's notion of progress, which subordinated public life to private desire, shrinking the citizen into the consumer. Moreover, the Enlightenment's combination of individualism and universalism, liberating desire in the service of humanity, implied contempt for the bonds of family, community,

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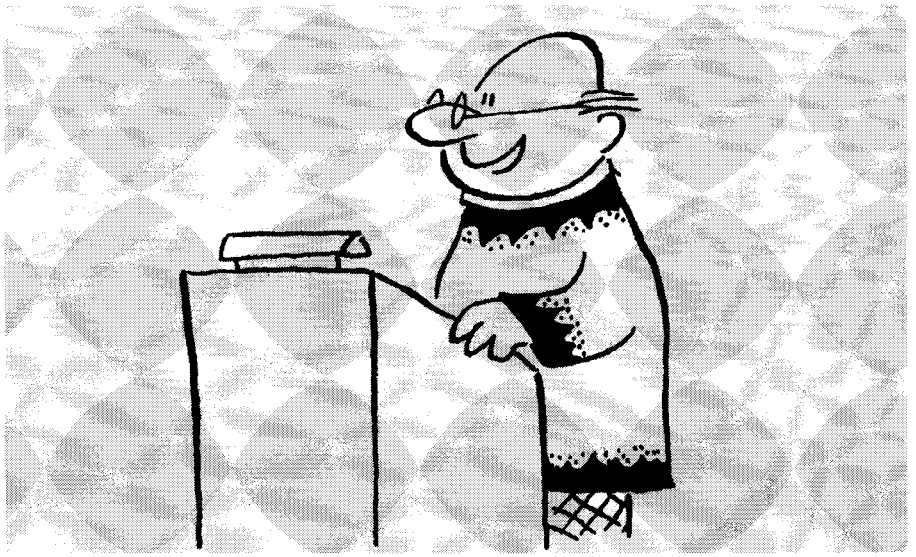
and religion, and Lasch worries that we have been cutting ourselves off at the knees, undercutting the bases of civility.

The founders of liberalism and the American republic, while devoted to individual liberty and to progress, still relied on "society" to teach morals and self-restraint. But as Lasch points out, in our time, the public principles expressed in law and embodied in capitalism have penetrated the private sphere and hammered it into something like their own image.

For Lasch as for Orwell, the civil decencies are associated with the discipline of the old, relatively autonomous middle class of producers and small-holders, upholders of the "bourgeois" virtues like work and responsibility, combined with what Lasch calls "moral realism," a skepticism about progress and a recognition of costs and limits. Even that old middle class, however, had a foot in both camps: It taught moderation, but it pursued affluence, and whatever its doubts, it held that progress ranks among the higher necessities, something you "can't fight." In any case, as Lasch indicates, the bourgeoisie is dying, yielding to a "professional-managerial" class on the one hand, and on the other, to a working class that preserves some of the older virtues. Like Orwell's Winston Smith, Lasch has a certain, forlorn hope that salvation is from the proles.

Even that whisper, however, is being drowned out by the chatter of the intelligentsia—Lasch's special target—who, at least since the 1950s, have included the working class in their ancient disdain for the "booboisie." As Lasch observes, mainstream intellectuals, though suspicious of technological progress, cling to an idea of *cultural* progress and to the image of themselves as an avant-garde, eager to liberate the less fortunate from the constraints of tradition, language, and community.

No partisan of *gemeinschaft*, Lasch recognizes—how not?—that communities and faiths can be confining and bigoted. He aims only to right the balance, calling attention to their virtues and their place, honored but subsidiary, in the order of human things. He quotes Orestes Brownson approvingly, "man grasps the universal only through the particular," and as that implies, Lasch sees families and communities as schools of dignity, justified as the training grounds of citizenship. He has doubts about busing to achieve racial balance, but none about the need for federal intervention to protect the right to vote.



"Just ask yourselves—Aren't you better off now than you were two thousand years ago?"

Most of *The True and Only Heaven* is a search through alternatives to Enlightenment doctrine for principles that deserve to rule, and Lasch is attracted by the Christianity and the civic republicanism he sees at the foundation of the American political traditions. Those two voices, however, sing very dissonant songs. The "republican tradition" (itself a controversial notion), is rooted in decisively modern thinkers like Machiavelli, who valued politics, but who accepted, or exhorted on behalf of, the pursuit of mastery over nature. As Lasch notes, republicanism directed self-assertion into the public sphere, governing private desire, but in the interest of dominion. Although Lasch admires republicanism's politicality, he rejects its version of the soul. The inner qualities he admires derive from religion and ancient philosophy: an acceptance of limits informed by hope, a "confidence in the underlying order of things" which inspires a "disposition to see things through" even in the face of defeat, tragic vision warmed by faith. Partial allies against the Enlightenment, republicanism and religion are also mortal foes, so that Lasch is trying to steer between Scylla and Charybdis.

The American tradition is full of thinkers who have tried to synthesize the two traditions, obscuring but not overcoming the stark Augustinian antithesis between the city of God and the city of man. Among Lasch's heroes, for example, Reinhold Niebuhr, while rejecting "naive" and linear views of progress, also held that history involves a forward movement, and chided Augustine for an "excessive realism" guilty of setting "premature" limits to human achievement. So too, William James—who urged pragmatism, among other things, as a way of avoiding ultimate choices—saw the "moral alternative to war" in a conflict against nature. And while Lasch reminds us of Emerson's darker, theological side, a valuable corrective, he underplays Emerson's suspicion of particular relationships and of politics, and his confident assertion that "evil is good in the making." Defined by a negation, the intellectual coalition to which Lasch appeals is full of uncertain friends.

Yet this is largely as it should be: *The True and Only Heaven* is a prolegomenon, not a program, more prophecy than code of law. Lasch maintains that his version of populism asks the right question—How can dignity and decentralization be achieved in a modern economy?—but he admits it offers no clear answer. And surely, Lasch has set himself a sufficiently heroic task in attempting to persuade his readers that abundance and mastery are not stars to steer by. For us, as for Odysseus, getting free from Polyphemus is a precondition of finding our way home. □

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ONE FIXED DESIRE

LETTERS OF KATHERINE ANNE PORTER
Selected and Edited by Isabel Bayley
Atlantic Monthly Press, $29.95, 642 pp.

Robert E. Hosmer, Jr.

W. H. Auden was "an unusually stinking and opinionated sodomite"; Charlie Chaplin "an odious little beast"; T. S. Eliot "a dry damned soul who packs an awful wallop"; Edmund Wilson "a mere goon"; and as for Carson McCullers, well, her first book was the product of "a peculiarly corrupt mind, a small stunted talent incapable of growth, and her further work has borne this out in my mind." Whose mind? Katherine Anne Porter's. And so it goes in this six-hundred-page collection, a mere selection from the letters of an important American writer: in her editor's note, Isabel Bayley, Porter's literary executor since 1974, informs us that there were "thousands" of letters from the period of 1930 to 1963, the writer's major working years. Bayley's work is exemplary, not only in her choices, but in her scholarly attention to detail and textual apparatus; her chronology, "who's who" list, introduction, and index provide consistently accurate and helpful information.

What Porter disliked, she disliked with ferocious intensity; what she liked, she embraced with unqualified enthusiasm: Henry James was "the very greatest artist and novelist this country ever produced"; Marianne Moore, "my favorite living poet and one of the most delicious persons alive"; Eudora Welty, "very seriously gifted, very imaginative and bold and complex." And despite a pervasive loathing for homosexuals, she brought herself to praise Auden: "I know of no gifted human being of whose morals, manners, whole way of life and conduct of life, I disapprove of more entirely than I do of Auden's—I think he is perfectly awful. And how I love his poetry."

The letters Isabel Bayley has chosen with such care and resonant precision chronicle the wanderings of Porter's person and spirit during her most creative phase, for it was this time period that saw the publication of her major fiction from *Flowering Judas and Other Stories* (1930) to *Ship of Fools* (1963), with *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939), *The Leaning Tower and Other Stories* (1944) appearing along the way. We follow Porter's restless odyssey from home to Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Belgium, and back home again. From these various places she maintained a steady stream of correspondence with a who's who of American literary life and legend: Glenway Wescott, Ezra Pound, Josephine Herbst, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon. To read her correspondence is to live some of that life.

Certainly, some of Porter's letters reveal her as harsh, intolerant, and unforgiving, particularly toward Catholics (they are "Fascists" and "we are in danger of being taken over by Catholics"), homosexuals ("this whole city [New York] now simply swarms with every little pervert...they are really taking the place, speaking of termites...the most depraved and tiresome set of half-humans I ever saw"), and writers of whom she disapproved, not only McCullers but others like "poor Malcolm Cowley [who] never was anything but cold oatmeal from the neck up" and Hemingway, "such a bore of a man really and such an incomplete artist...so completely uninteresting and insignificant." Yet so many other letters illuminate a sweet, gentle, and compassionate woman for whom life was not easy; most impressive is her generous encouragement to younger writers like Eudora Welty, and the palpable affection manifest in her extended correspondence with her nephew Paul.

It is the artistic dimension of Katherine Anne Porter that emerges with an expected fullness in this collection, for she has always been known as a woman so dedicated to her art as to consider it as a monastic vocation. In a letter to Glenway Wescott, written in 1941, she declares what has always been her "one fixed desire: to be a good artist, responsible to the last comma for what I write." And nothing will stand in her way—no divorce suit, no critic, no editor, no publisher. In her dealings with the latter, Porter is ruthless, driving a hard bargain with every contract signed. Throughout, these letters show that Porter stuck to that intention, declared in a letter to Albert Erskine, her fourth husband: "my job now is to keep on my feet and keep working. And I feel pretty ferocious about it. I would slit the throat of a six-months-old infant who got in my way."

Nowhere does Porter's solitary dedication to her art come across more strongly than in the story of her writing her only novel, the long-awaited *Ship of Fools*. These letters record a labor decades-long, for what was begun as a twelve-page ship's journal written as a letter en route from Mexico to Germany in 1931 did not find final, published form as *Ship of Fools* until 1962; Porter's letters are studded with references to her false starts, delays, postponements, and disappointments in the process. The novel's million-dollar success failed to make up for its being judged something far less in literary terms. Thirty years' labor on a work that many critics scorned.

Life was a struggle for Porter—against so many forces, but particularly against ill health (she was plagued by respiratory and pulmonary problems), a self-acknowledged tendency to melancholia, and a deeply unsettled personal life. Numerous love affairs and four broken marriages littered

REVIEWERS

EDWARD T. WHEELER *is chairman of the English Department at the Williams School in New London, Connecticut.*

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS *teaches political science at Rutgers University.*

ROBERT E. HOSMER, JR., *teaches in the department of English language and literature at Smith College.*

GEORGE EMILE IRANI *is an Arab-American who teaches political science at Franklin College in Indiana.*

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her life, and she assessed it all: "love, for me, has been rather more as if I were a bundle of wheat going through the threshing machine than anything else. When I came through I was clean winnowed"; "marriage for me has meant pure disaster, and a strange cruel starvation of the heart." Nonetheless, a difficult, dislocated life did not embitter her; in a letter to her nephew, she opined that, "all life worth living is difficult, nobody promised us happiness; it is not a commodity you have earned, or shall ever earn. It is a by-product of brave living, and it never comes in the form we expect, or at the season we hoped for, or as a result of our planning for it."

May the publication of these *Letters* renew and refresh Katherine Anne Porter's presence among us as a writer of substance and very considerable grace. □

LESSONS FROM LEBANON

PITY THE NATION
The Abduction of Lebanon
Robert Fisk
Atheneum, $24.95, 678 pp.

George Emile Irani

The 1980s were a decade of disaster for U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. In 1979, the Shah of Iran, a staunch friend and ally of the U.S., was overthrown and replaced by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Sixty-three Americans were taken hostage at the American embassy in Teheran. This marked the first confrontation between the United States and the forces of Islamic revivalism. In 1982, another friend of the U.S., Israel, invaded Lebanon. As a result of that invasion, Marines were dispatched to Lebanon and 241 U.S. servicemen lost their lives. In January President George Bush went to war with Iraq. The consequences for the region are still in doubt.

Robert Fisk's book is a welcome contribution and an excellent reminder of what type of neighborhood Lebanon and the Middle East is today. Fisk, unlike many other Western journalists, has an intimate knowledge of Lebanon. Middle East correspondent for the *Independent* in Britain, Fisk wrote for the *Times* of London from 1976 to 1987 as their Middle East correspondent. At forty-four, he is today the only foreign correspondent still based in Beirut.

Fisk is a sharp and balanced observer of a country, Lebanon, which in the last sixteen years has been in the throes of a ruthless and bloody civil war. In addition to the internal contradictions between the various warlords and thugs, Lebanon since 1975 has become an arena of confrontation for regional (Syria, Israel, Iran, the PLO) and global powers (U.S., Soviet Union, France).

Fisk takes us across Lebanon. In the South he encounters Shiites, Palestinians, Israelies, and their Christian Lebanese proxies. He depicts in poignant words the relationship between the United Nations (UNIFIL) forces stationed in South Lebanon and the various militias and armies roaming the area.

His most powerful chapters are those dealing with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and its aftermath. Here he is at his best trying to present the facts objectively without falling victim to the propaganda of the Christian Phalanges, the PLO, Syria, or the Israeli occupation troops. As can be expected, Fisk came under fire for his vivid description of Israeli soldiers' behavior in Lebanon. Basically, he disagreed with the official Israeli line that the purpose of "Operation Peace for Galilee" was to mop up Palestinian "terrorists" from Lebanon. Fisk is outraged at the unjust and bloody fate facing the innocent civilians—Lebanese and Palestinians—in West Beirut.

In the summer of 1982 the forces of Ariel Sharon laid siege to the Lebanese capital and cut off water and electricity from the population. Between June 4 and the end of September 1982 alone, the Israeli invasion left 17,825 dead. A heavy price to pay for a country that had signed an armistice with Israel in 1949 and did not participate in any war between Arab armies and Israel after 1948.

Fisk's reporting created trouble not only from the Israelis. He tells us that the Iraqis had complained about his reporting of how the wives of men who opposed Saddam Hussein were "gang-raped in front of their husbands. The Syrians, too, did their best to have me removed from Beirut, not just because I had reported from Hama (where more than 10,000 people were murdered by the Syrian regime) but because in the words of the Syrian ambassador in London—I had shown contempt for Arabs in general."

The story of how America was dragged into the Lebanese quagmire is another interesting chapter. For Reagan and his staff Lebanon had become the staging ground for an all-out war against the evil empire, i.e. the Soviet Union. The result of such a folly was the blowing up of the U.S. embassy in West Beirut and the killing by a suicide bomber of 241 servicemen. Another consequence of the U.S. blunder in Lebanon was the taking of American and other Western hostages. Fisk has a moving chapter on the kidnapping of his colleague and friend, Terry Anderson, the Associated Press bureau chief who has been in captivity in Lebanon for six years.

This book is must reading for the lessons it contains for all those who are concerned with that vital region of the world. The Middle East has been for most Americans a kind of distant but constant nuisance, a place deliberately cut off from the "Judaeo-Christian" lenses through which we are trained to understand and manage the world in which we live.

For American Catholics, this book is a reminder of how Christianity can be used merely to shield an ethnic identification. The predicament of the Maronites of Lebanon and the Arab Christians in general is another incentive to work for the peace which is more than ever needed in the land where Christ was born. This peace—*shalom, salaam*—cannot occur if we allow the "abduction" of Lebanon to become that of the whole Middle East. □

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Matters historical & ethical

Lawrence S. Cunningham

In *Ethics in the Sanctuary*, Margaret Battin studies ethical issues within organized religion. Using case studies, she singles out four areas for extended consideration: the question of confidentiality; high risk demands in religion (e.g., "snake handling"; refusal of medical treatment, etc.); coercive or deceptive outreach programs of conversion; and the ethics involved in pastoral counseling. In all of these areas, she is able to draw on actual cases which appear before the civil courts in our litigious society or which involved criminal charges being brought by legal authorities—as in the recent convictions of Christian Scientists for homicide after medically neglected children died. Battin makes some shrewd observations in her analysis of these ethical problems although it is not clear to me that she gets much beyond the jurisprudence on those issues which have come before the courts and been reported in the press. She is better at stating ethical criteria to handle potential cases when they do arise. Furthermore, she does make plain how contentious many of these issues are because of the sometimes competing constitutional issues being raised and the prior assumptions of a given religious body.

Ethics in the Sanctuary, *by Margaret P. Battin, Yale, $23.50, 291 pp.*

It may well be that this book will trigger other such studies in applied ethics as related to the churches. If it does, one hopes that such ethicists will be in dialogue with theologians (Battin is a philosopher) in order to arrive at an understanding of religion more sophisticated than is evidenced in this work. At times, her facts are simply wrong (e.g., her discussion of the Donatists or her contention that Buddhists and Hindus do not "risk all" for religion) or badly stated. Thus, for example, she calls Holiness churches a "cult or fringe church," which will come as big news to the burgeoning Assemblies of God in middle-class America, while the Mormons are referred to as "the church," which may be appropriate in Utah where the author lives but hardly in the rest of the world. More substantively, she sets out fundamental religious criteria for various denominations (in her parlance: O-order doctrines) as her starting point but sees them primarily as a set of scriptural texts; this strikes me as a hopelessly unsophisticated approach to things. In sum: a very promising field of inquiry imperfectly realized.

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

Gallagher's book, which makes a good companion to John Mahoney's well received *The Making of Moral Theology* (Oxford, 1987), studies the trajectory—less than a hundred years—of the old manuals of moral theology, widely used in Catholic seminaries for the training of priest-confessors, through the period when they were justly critiqued for their ahistorical outlook and detachment from the sources of Christian theology to their demise in the period following on the Second Vatican Council.

Books like this are welcome in these days because we are a generation away from the watershed events of Vatican II and much of what was the experience of middle-aged Catholics is rapidly becoming (or has already become) ancient history. It is useful and timely to begin to understand where we were and how far we have come. My own theological education is a case in point. My first studies in moral theology were with Francis Hurth, S.J. (who, wags said, often wrote under the *nom de plume* of Pope Pius XII) and my last with Josef Fuchs, S.J. The difference between the two in approach and outlook was, for this tyro at least, a Copernican revolution. Furthermore, it was in this period that I read Bernard Häring's watershed volumes *The Law of Christ* and instantly knew that I had just labored (I read a French translation of the German) at a book which represented a sea-change in theology.

Time Past, Time Present: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology, *by John A. Gallagher, Paulist, $12.95, 278 pp.*

Gallagher's book traces the sea-change as the older manualist tradition eroded under the critique of thinkers whose names are now legendary in theology: Thils, Chenu, Congar, Lottin, Rahner, Lonergan, Fuchs, Häring, et al. He also has some fine chapters on moral thinking in this country in the period from after World War II until the present, especially the events surrounding the ferocious debates unleashed by the publication of *Humanae vitae* (1968) and the discussion of situation ethics arising from the books written by the late John Robinson and Joseph Fletcher. Gallagher concludes with a nice wrap-up on the proportionalism debate which centers around, among others, Richard McCormick, S.J.

Many of the authors in Cohen's anthology lament the imprecise and/or pejorative use of the word "fundamentalist." An Islamic contributor (Riffat Hassan) finds the term insulting when bandied about in the Western press with respect to Muslim belief; a Catholic contributor (Patrick

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Arnold), by contrast, takes on the word enthusiastically in his screed againt the ultra-conservative forces in contemporary Catholicism. Most authors recognize that the word derives from early twentieth-century American Protestantism and there is fair (but not total) consensus that fundamentalism not only demands an orthodoxy of belief but a missionary resistance to modern culture. Fundamentalism and orthodox belief, as Jaroslav Pelikan demonstrates, are not synonyms nor are fundamentalists and evangelicals interchangeable terms.

The authors in this volume could not agree on a definition of fundamentalism, nor was there unanimity as to whether the term is helpful in discussing religions outside of Christianity. James Davison Hunter argues that the term is widely applicable and, if a taut definition seems unavailable, it is still possible to outline a general description of the phenomenon; what Wittgenstein would call a "family resemblance" or what George Marsden, in this volume, calls "broad and narrow" definitions. It may well be that we will have to wait until the Fundamentalism Project, headed by the indefatigable Martin Marty, finishes its work at Chicago before we get a full picture of a movement which has been so much in the news over the past decade or so.

The reviewer's cliché about anthologies ("it's a mixed bag") applies to this volume. Some of the essays are genuinely informative (I would single out Marsden on Protestant fundamentalism for its historical

The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, *edited by Norman J. Cohen, Eerdmans, $14.95, 266 pp.*

sophistication) while others plead for both accuracy and less bias in the use of the term as an epithet. Still others seem to fall either into generic editorializing about the phenomenon or, like one on fundamentalism and psychoanalysis, are irritatingly reductive.

Complementary to this anthology is Thomas O'Meara's *Fundamentalism: A Catholic Perspective* (Paulist, 1990) which is a theologian's assessment of the phenomenon as it relates to the contemporary Catholic scene as well as an alternative strategy for those tempted by its blandishments of secure faith.

Butler's study of the Christianization of the American people (by which he means the Eastern seaboard; the Southwest is never mentioned) is an extremely well written and fascinating work. His main argument is that the accepted view of American religion as evolving from New England Puritanism is far too simple and, in fact,

Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People, *by Jon Butler, Harvard, $29.50, 360 pp.*

belied by the facts. Like other historians, he also corrects the *mythos* of a profoundly Christian group of Founding Fathers so beloved of fundamentalist preachers today. He has some very fine pages on the vexatious issue as to how "Christian" or "religious" or "secular" or "Deist" the American Revolution, in fact, was.

Where Butler is most fascinating is in his close documentation of "popular" and nonorthodox religious impulses coming from Europe and inserting themselves into American religious life from the seventeenth century on. Magic, astrology, folk religion, divining, spiritual healing, the use of amulets, treasure hunting, dream interpretation, and occult practices were part and parcel of the religious landscape of America. That the 1980s could see a robust evangelical presence in politics, an astrologer in the White House, New Age wackiness emanating from the West Coast, and preachers hustling a buck on the basis of visions and dreams will only seem odd to those who have not read Butler's book. One further appreciates Butler's willingness to trace the continuities of American religion. Thus, in a very fine chapter on eighteenth-century revivalism, he shows that the Tennent family (father and sons),

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with their emphasis on supernatural intervention and healing, are the ancestors of such contemporaries as Oral Roberts while George Whitefield's nondenominational preachments have more in common with the modern tradition which includes Billy Sunday, Billy Graham, and Charles Schuller.

Butler's work reflects both enormous research and brisk readability. For partisan reasons, I would have liked more space for a consideration of Catholics (Butler seems less sure of himself in this area: He has Bellarmine a Frenchman; Dionysius the Areopagite a medieval writer; and refers to the Ursilines [*sic*]), but this is a quibble when reading a book from which so much can be learned presented in such an attractive style.

Sandoval's modest volume has neither the depth of scholarship nor the conceptual rigor of Butler's book. It does have a passionate point of view: Hispanics are the forgotten folks of American Catholicism. Himself from the Southwest, Sandoval can barely disguise his irritation at the patronizing racism of late-arriving Anglo prelates and missioners toward a people who were Christian natives from the first days of European exploration.

In brief chapters Sandoval traces the Hispanic story from the era of exploration and settlements through the unhappy decades when Hispanics were treated like strangers in their own land to the new resurgence of Hispanic self-consciousness and

On the Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States, *by Moises Sandoval, Orbis, $8.95, 152 pp.*

self-affirmation. Brevity, of course, brings with it lacunae. In his analysis of Puerto Ricans in New York there is no mention of the redoubtable Ivan Illich. As a native Floridian I was chauvinistic enough to have missed any mention of the vibrant Hispanic communities in Tampa (Ybor City), Pensacola, and Key West.The omissions, of course, point to the wealth of research yet to be done. An interesting final chapter, written by Edwin Sylvest of Southern Methodist University, does trace the origins and development of Hispanic Protestantism in this country.

That this story needs to be told is patent. It is a story too often neglected or elided over in more general histories of the church.

The School of Charity: The Letters of Thomas Merton on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction, edited by Brother Patrick Hart, OCSO, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $24.95, 422 pp.

The third volume of Thomas Merton's letters (two more are projected) is a chronological printing of his correspondence dealing with monastic life, religious reform, and spiritual direction. The general focus of this volume will certainly recommend itself to those in the vowed life but it is my strong belief that it is of immense value for those concerned with the Christian life generally and the spiritual life in particular. In more than one place I have unburdened myself of the conviction that Merton's particular gift to the twentieth-century church was his ability to mediate the ancient resources of monastic spirituality in a manner attractive to those who do not formally embrace that life.

Merton blended a sensibility honed on the classics of modernism with a lived encounter with the best of the monastic tradition: its emphasis on silence; reading as a spiritual discipline; worship as a core human value; the rhythm of daily life; a sense of wonder; and the value of doing the ordinary in a spiritually alert fashion. What comes across strongly in these letters is his sense (developed early on) that these values were crucial and recuperable even when they were submerged in a sea of ephemeral usages in the monasticism he first encountered. Merton, then, was at the forefront of monastic renewal although some readers will be surprised at a conservative streak in his letters from the late 1960s where he saw—presciently—that much "reform" was, by turns, ill-considered and peripheral.

With a gift from the university's Jesuit community and matching monies from the university itself, Boston College founded the Jesuit Institute in 1987/88. The purpose of the institute is to provide a place where authentic interdisciplinary academic work could be done from the perspective of Christian concerns in general and the Jesuit educational charism in particular. The papers collected by Father Robert Daly (who heads the institute) were first presented in an 1989 conference which launched the institute's work.

After an introductory essay by John Padberg on the historical sources in Jesuit history from which an institute might draw, the papers were devoted to three large areas of potential concern: (1) issues of the family in the context of changing cultural standards and ethical imperatives; (2) the relationship of religion and the arts; (3) the relationship between culture and belief. These are quite obviously widely different fields of inquiry and, consequently, the papers do not add up to a coherent whole in terms of subject matter. Their value rests in their capacity to provide paradigms for how broad issues of contemporary concern might be addressed from the peculiar angle of the Christian tradition while drawing on a range of academic disciplines and what issues should be raised.

In All Things: Religious Faith and American Culture, *edited by Robert J. Daly, S.J., Sheed and Ward, $14.95, 221 pp.*

The daily headlines assure us that the family (so many single-parent households; so much child abuse; so much divorce) needs help that will require changes in public policy, societal attitudes, and whatever resources remain in the family structure itself. Similarly, but less urgently perhaps, there is an ideologically driven crisis in humanistic education. Does the historic Christian tradition of reading and singing and creating have resources to heal the fractures so apparent in the humanities today? Finally, it is hardly news that modern (and postmodern?) culture and faith have had an abrasive (corrosive?) relationship. The areas of concern for this first conference, then, while wide, are nonetheless defensible.

Beneath the topics themselves are deeper issues which are raised either directly or

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indirectly. Thus the papers of John Padberg, John Coleman, Rosemary Haughton, and Michael Buckley, while dealing ostensibly with quite different issues, basically ask: education and inquiry to what end and for whose good? I am sure that they would finally say in line with the Jesuit motto that it is for the greater glory of God—*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. In this ecumenical age I think that they would not find it amiss to endorse the motto of their friendly rivals, the Dominicans, who seek to hand on the things that they themselves have first contemplated (*contemplata aliis tradere*). Those two mottos conjoined strike me as being what the Institute is about and, judging from this volume, it is off to a promising start. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 242)

Israel giving sanction to polygyny (not polyandry or polygamy), one wonders about using this primitive cultural paradigm for other criterion events. Remember the woman in the Old Testament whose body was cut up after multiple rapes and distributed to the tribes of Israel.

It's apparently easy for some clerical male celibates to glibly ignore the necessity for integrity and dignity of women in marriage, whether in Africa or elsewhere.

CEIL REH

Who's the wimp here?

Scheller, Ill.

To the Editors: Writing about the peace movement, George Weigel is more than impertinent; he is downright arrogant ["A War about America," February 22]. There is no one person who can respond on behalf of the movement—however it may be defined. I hope I have enough credentials to make some observations.

First, many of us in the justice and peace movement based on nonviolent love "unambiguously condemned" Saddam Hussein a long time ago, when he was still an obvious ally of the U.S. government, along with similar creatures such as Marcos, Pinochet, Noriega, the Shah of Iran, and Roberto D'Aubuisson, who have played footsy with American imperialism and militarism through the years.

Weigel does not like us peaceniks to bash corporations. Nor does he care for our witness against American power. Probably he does not admit there is such a creature as the global corporate state or the national security state. He wants to leave folks like me with only a vague and limited agenda.

Sad to say, not all justice and peace movement folks join those few of us who adopt the stance of nonviolence. Nor do we easily speak with one voice about anything. It is a given that most people, like George Weigel, accept violence as a practical principle for living. So our witness to nonviolence is minuscule.

To Weigel, however, it seems the American empire is so misunderstood and so fragile that it hurts to be confronted with a charge of imperial brutality. America is "tough, but O so gentle." I am reminded of the old Charles Atlas ads; in Weigel's replay, the big brute peace movement is kicking sand in the face of wimpy America. Why must we read such nonsense in the pages of *Commonweal*? PAUL KABAT

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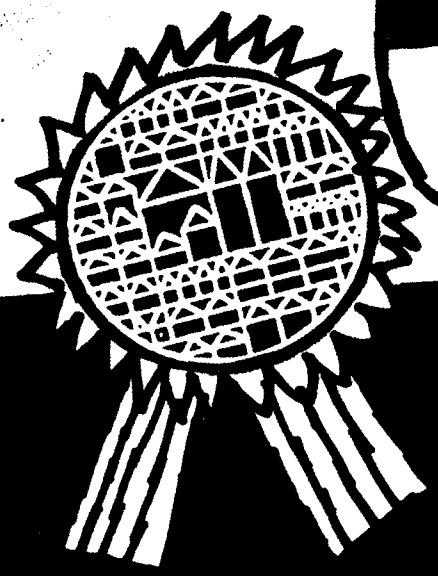

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